

Just Who Is Jesus Christ?
Christology – The Doctrine of Jesus Christ
2 Corinthians 4:6; Hebrews 1:1-3; John 1:1, 14-18

According to an old legend, a man became lost in his travels and wandered into a bed of quicksand. Confucius saw the man's predicament and said, "It is evident that men should stay out of places such as this." Next, Buddha observed the situation and said, "Let that man's plight be a lesson to the rest of the world." Then Muhammad came by and said to the sinking man, "Alas, it is the will of God." Finally, Jesus appeared. "Take my hand, brother," He said, "and I will save you."

CHRISTIANITY IS CHRIST! Paul E. Little, in his book, *Know What You Believe*, wrote: "Buddha is not essential to the teaching of Buddhism, or Muhammad to Islam, but everything about Christianity is determined by the person and work of Jesus Christ. Christianity owes its life and character in every detail to Christ. Its teachings are teachings about Him. He was the origin and will be the fulfillment of its hopes. He is the source of its ideas, which were born of what He said and did. The strength of Christ's church is the strength of His own Spirit, who is omnipotent."

The term "Christian" first appears in Acts 11:26, and was originally a derisive term given to those who were followers of Christ; it essentially meant "of the party of Christ." So, who is this Jesus Christ we say we follow... that we claim to worship... identify with? Can we know Him? Yes. The Apostle John, perhaps the most intimate of Jesus' disciples, and an eyewitness to most of His 3+ years of earthly ministry, tells us in the Gospel account that bears his name: "*And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.*" (John 20:30-31; also 21:24-25)

The late Dr. Herschel Hobbs, SBC pastor and theologian said, "Jesus Christ is the key to our knowledge of God and of history. The Bible itself becomes unintelligible apart from Him. The Old Testament theme is the messianic hope. The Gospels recount His incarnation; Acts tells of His continuing work; the Epistles interpret His person and work; the Revelation sets forth His final victory and glory.

"It is impossible for us fully to comprehend God until we grasp the meaning of the person and work of Jesus Christ. Only in considering Him does history become more than frustration or, to borrow Shakespeare's description of life, more than a 'tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.' It is of supreme importance, therefore, that we consider Jesus Christ." (*Fundamentals Of Our Faith*, pg. 38)

There are many who would like to know more about Jesus, about His childhood, His early adult years, and more. God, through the agency of human authors, however, wrote down only those things that were necessary to prove Jesus was and is the Messiah, our Savior and Lord. While we will only scratch the surface of His person and reality, let's get to know Him...

I. Jesus Is Known By His Names

While there are at least eighty names given for Jesus in the Bible that speak to His person, nature and work, we're going to briefly look at just a few of the specific ones.

1. **Jesus** – It means "Jehovah is salvation" (Matthew 1:21). It is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew name "Joshua" or "Yeshua". A relatively common name among the Jews, it is the human and personal name given to our Lord

and signifies that God came to man in human form for his salvation. Of the name "Jesus" Scripture says, *"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."* (Acts 4:12)

2. **Christ** – Our Lord's official title. It is the Greek synonym - "Christos" – for the Hebrew word "Messiah", which means "the Anointed One", and speaks to the faithful Jew's hope and expectations for the "Coming One" (Luke 7:19). The angels sang of Him using this name at His birth (Luke 2:11), and Jesus assumed this title at the beginning of His earthly ministry in His reading of Isaiah 61:1-2 (Luke 4:18). Jesus even claimed the title of "Messiah" in His conversation with the Samaritan woman (John 4:25-26).
3. **Immanuel** – *"Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, 'God with us.'"* (Matthew 1:23)
4. **Lord** – This name/title means "owner, lord, or master with respect to slaves or property" (Note Matthew 25:19). In the Greek and English versions of the Old Testament, *Adonai* and *Jehovah*, both names for God, are translated as "Lord" and "LORD" respectively, but in the NT the word is most often used to translate the covenant name of God – Jehovah – and is used as a title of deity. This title was given to Jesus at birth (Luke 2:11) we see it used in Thomas' confession, *"My Lord and my God"* (John 20:28), and is often seen in such combinations as *"Lord Jesus Christ"* (1 Corinthians 16:22), and *"Jesus Christ our Lord"* (Romans 1:3).
5. **Savior** – This title, which appears only twice in the Gospels in relation to Jesus - *"For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."* (Luke 2:11) – speaks to both the hope and work of Messiah, the Savior or Deliverer from sin and condemnation. (cf. Acts 5:31-32)
6. **Word** or **Logos** – It means "the expression of thought – not merely the name of an object..." In relation to Jesus, it denotes "the Divine Expression". This name/title refers to Jesus as the "Personal Word", the revealer or personal manifestation of the Godhead, not in part, but of the whole Deity (John 1:1, 14-18).
7. **Son of Man** – This is the name Jesus used most often of Himself, appears some 83 times in the Gospels, and always refers to Jesus. It was a Messianic title (note Daniel 7:13-14), and speaks directly to Christ's humanity and identity with man whom He came to save. *"For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."* (Luke 19:10)
8. **Son of God** – In the NT this name/title refers to Jesus, who often used it of Himself (cf. John 3:16-17). In the context of Scripture and the culture of the day, to call a person "son of" was to infer equality with the father. The name "Son of God" means that Jesus is equal to the "Most High God" (Luke 1:32).

II. The Eternality of Christ

While the very first Christmas has been called the "birthday" of Jesus, it was only the birth of His humanity. As with God the Father, Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity, always was, and always will be; He exists endlessly, or is infinite/eternal (John 1:1, 14; 8:58; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 13:8; Revelation 1:11). In the title "Lord" (in the Greek, "Kurios") we see a direct connection with the

covenant name of God, *Jehovah*, which also speaks of Christ's self-existence and eternity.

Jesus did not simply "appear" that first Christmas morning. His biography was written centuries before His birth. In fact, the Old Testament (which was completed about 400 years before His birth) records at least sixty major prophecies and 270 ramifications that were fulfilled in the incarnation, earthly ministry, and crucifixion of Christ. Consider just the following prophecies (25) concerning the coming Messiah and their fulfillment:

1. He would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2 & Matthew 2:1)
2. Born of a woman (Genesis 3:15 & Luke 1:26ff & Galatians 4:4)
3. He would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14 & Matthew 1:18-20, Luke 2:7).
4. Of the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10 & Luke 3:23-33, Hebrews 7:14).
5. A descendant of David (2 Samuel 7:12f & Matthew 1:1)
6. He would be called out of Egypt (Hosea 11:1 & Matthew 2:15).
7. The children of Bethlehem would be slain (Jeremiah 31:15 & Matthew 2:16-18).
8. He was heralded by a messenger (Isaiah 40:3, Malachi 3:1 & Matthew 3:1-2).
9. He would teach in parables (Psalm 78:2 and Matthew 13:34-35).
10. The mission statement of His public ministry (Isaiah 61:1-2 & Luke 4:16-21).
11. That He would be betrayed by a friend (Psalm 41:9 & John 13:18)
12. His betrayal price was 30 pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12-13 & Matthew 26:15).
13. He would be rejected by the Jews (Psalm 118:22 & John 7:48).
14. The nailing of His hands and feet (Psalm 69:21 & John 19:18).
15. He was crucified between with thieves (Isaiah 53:12 & Mark 15:27-28).
16. The gall and vinegar He was given to drink (Psalm 69:21 & Matthew 27:34, 48).
17. The soldiers would gamble for His garments (Psalm 22:18 & Matthew 27:35).
18. That none of His bones would be broken (Psalm 34:20 & John 19:36).
19. That He would be spit upon and scourged (Isaiah 50:6 & Mark 14:56).
20. That He would be forsaken by God (Psalm 22:1 & Matthew 27:46).
21. That He would be buried with the rich (Isaiah 53:9 & Matthew 27:57-60).
22. That His side would be pierced (Zechariah 12:10 & John 19:37).
23. That He would rise from the dead (Psalm 68:18 & Matthew 16:21).
24. That He would ascend to Heaven (Psalm 16:10 & Acts 1:9).
25. That He would establish an everlasting Kingdom (Daniel 2:44 & Hebrews 12:22-28).

Jesus fulfilled every one of these predictions. Could it have been mere coincidence? According to Peter Stoner (the late Chairman of the Departments of Math and Astronomy at Pasadena City College, and Chairman of the Science Division, Westmont College), the mathematical probability of Jesus fulfilling just eight of these sixty major prophecies is 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000. To grasp the enormity of this number, he has provided a picture for our understanding. The entire state of Texas would be covered with silver dollars, two feet deep. One coin would be marked, and then the entire sea of silver would be thoroughly mixed. A blindfolded man would be instructed to travel as far as he wished, but he must pick up the marked coin on his first try. The chances of that occurring are the same as Jesus fulfilling just eight of the sixty major prophecies. And to think, he fulfilled them all! The probability of Jesus not being the Messiah is mathematically impossible (from *More Than a Carpenter*, Josh McDowell, 1977, p. 107–8).

III. The Incarnation of Christ in Jesus

In his book *The New Evidence That Demands A Verdict*, Josh McDowell writes: "Imagine you are watching a farmer plow a field. You notice that an ant hill will be plowed under by the farmer on his next time around. Because you love ants, you run to the ant hill to warn its tiny inhabitants. First you shout to them the impending danger, but they continue their work. You then try many other forms of communication, but nothing seems to get through to the imperiled ants. You soon realize that the only way you can really reach them is by becoming one of them."

Throughout human history God used many different ways and means to communicate with mankind, to tell us of His message of hope and eternal life. He finally chose to come down as one of us (Hebrews 1:1-3 & John 1:14, 18). The word "incarnation" does not appear in Scripture, but its components do; it means "in flesh". Again, John 1:14 says, "*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...*" The theological concept of Christ's incarnation, that Jesus was and is fully God and fully human, is called the hypostatic or one-person union; and along with the triune nature of God is one of the most difficult concepts to comprehend. Even Scripture refers to the incarnation as a mystery beyond human comprehension (Ephesians 3:4-12), yet it is clearly evidenced in Scripture.

A. The Deity of Christ in His Incarnation

Regarding the Deity of Christ, C. S. Lewis wrote in *Mere Christianity*, "I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.' That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would be either a lunatic – on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg – or else he would be the Devil of hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse."

The Scripture clearly teaches that Jesus *is* the Christ, and thus fully God.

1. The Bible calls Him God (Matthew 1:21-22 [Immanuel – God with us]; John 1:1, 14; Titus 2:13; 1 John 5:20).
2. Jesus Claimed to be God (John 10:30; 14:9; 19:7; Matthew 26:63-64; John 5:18).
3. The virgin birth of Jesus (Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:16-20; Luke 1:26-38). Except by His enemies, no serious question about the virgin birth was raised throughout Christian history until the 18th and 19th centuries. There were many people alive when the Gospels

were written including Mary, and Luke – a physician (Colossians 4:14) – who could have denied it if it had been untrue.

4. Jesus exercised the power of God over nature (Luke 9:24ff; John 6:11ff).
5. Jesus healed the sick (Matthew 11:2-5; Luke 17:12ff).
6. Jesus raised the dead (John 11). [Lazarus]
7. Jesus forgave sin (Mark 2:1-12).
8. He did not protest others calling Him God (Matthew 16:14-20; John 20:28).
9. Angels worship Him (Luke 2:8-14; Hebrews 1:6).
10. Men worship Him (Matthew 14:33; John 20:28; Philippians 2:10).
11. He lived a sinless life (Hebrews 2:18, 4:14-16; 1 Peter 2:21-25; 2 Corinthians 5:21).
12. Jesus was bodily resurrected (Matthew 12:38-40; 28:1ff; Acts 1:3-11; Romans 1:3-4; 4:24-25; 1 Corinthians 15:1-8; Hebrews 7:25; Revelation 1:18).

Of all the events in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, of all the miracles, of all the teachings, of all the things said and done, it is the resurrection that testifies to the fact that Jesus is both Lord and Savior, and most defines us as Christians. Many people died on crosses, and had His ministry ended there, Jesus would arguably have been simply a good man/teacher, and but another martyr to some religious cause. But Jesus' story doesn't end on the cross; in fact, all four Gospels record not only the crucifixion, but also the bodily resurrection of Christ, and it is prominently articulated throughout the NT.

On the resurrection of Christ, William Lane Craig writes, "Without the belief in the resurrection the Christian faith could not have come into being. The disciples would have remained crushed and defeated men. Even had they continued to remember Jesus as their beloved teacher, his crucifixion would have forever silenced any hopes of his being the Messiah. The cross would have remained the sad and shameful end of his career. The origin of Christianity therefore hinges on the belief of the early disciples that God had raised Jesus from the dead." (from *The New Evidence That Demands A Verdict*, Josh McDowell, page 204).

Thomas Arnold, Oxford professor, and author of the three-volume *History of Rome*, wrote, "I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better and fuller evidence of every sort, to the understanding of a fair inquirer, than the great sign which God has given us that Christ died and rose again from the dead."

B. **The Humanity of Christ in His Incarnation**

Jesus was fully man...

1. He had a human body: Born of a woman (Matthew 1:18; Galatians 4:4); He grew in wisdom and stature (Luke 2:52); He was seen and touched by men (Matthew 26:12; 1 John 1:1).

2. He was subject to the limitations of humanity: He became tired, thirsty and hungry (John 4:6; Matthew 4:2; Luke 8:23ff; John 19:28); He became angry (Matthew 21:13; Mark 3:5); He wept (John 11:35); He endured physical pain (Hebrews 5:8); He was tempted (Matthew 4:1ff; Hebrews 2:18), yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15); and He was subject to death (Matthew 27:50; Romans 5:6). Note: God cannot die, but man can.

In his work, *The Crisis of the Christ*, G. Campbell Morgan wrote, "He was the God-man. Not God indwelling man. Of such there have been many. Not a man deified. Of such there have been none save in the myths of pagan systems of thought; but God and man, combining in one personality the two natures, a perpetual enigma and mystery, baffling the possibility of explanation."

Conclusion and Application

Considered one of the most definitive statements on the person of Jesus Christ is the statement of faith formulated at the...

Council of Chalcedon (451 A.D)

"Therefore, following the holy fathers, we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man, consisting also of a reasonable soul and body; of one substance with the Father as regards his Godhead, and at the same time of one substance with us as regards his manhood; like us in all respects, apart from sin; as regards his Godhead, begotten of the Father before the ages, but yet as regards his manhood begotten, for us men and for our salvation, of Mary the Virgin, the God-bearer; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, recognized in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence, not as parted or separated into two persons, but one and the same Son and Only-begotten God the Word, Lord Jesus Christ; even as the prophets from earliest times spoke of him, and our Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us, and the creed of the fathers has handed down to us."

God Sent Us A Savior

If our greatest need had been information
God would have sent us an educator.

If our greatest need had been technology
God would have sent us a scientist.

If our greatest need had been money
God would have sent us an economist.

If our greatest need had been pleasure
God would have sent us an entertainer.

But our greatest need was forgiveness
So God sent us a Savior!