

QUESTIONS WE WANT ANSWERED

13 What Is the Doctrine of Jesus Christ?

Editors Note: This lesson was not originally included in the corpus of work that Pastor Christensen prepared under the overarching title, **Questions We Want Answered**. He prepared it separately for a church membership class. The editor thought it was of such usefulness that it should be included in this book.

WHAT WE BELIEVE

We believe that Jesus Christ is true God and true man, having been conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary. He died on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins according to the Scriptures. Further, He arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven, where at the right hand of the Majesty of High, He is now our Priest and Advocate.

We believe that man was created in the image of God but fell into sin and is therefore lost and only through regeneration by the Holy Ghost can salvation and spiritual life be obtained.

We believe that the blood of Jesus Christ and His resurrection provide the only ground for justification and salvation for all who believe, and only such as received Jesus Christ are born of the Holy Spirit, and thus become children of God.

INTRODUCTION

The faith we profess differs from every religion known to man in the fact that it is based upon the **person** of its founder. All other religions have had founders, but not one of them erected their systems on their own selves. If it could be proven that Buddha, Confucius or Mohammad never lived, it would make no difference to the system of belief which simply would have originated or been based on another's writings. But if it could be proven that Jesus Christ never lived, Christianity would fall to the ground. Jesus is the sole foundation upon which the Christian faith rests. He is the cornerstone, keystone, archstone. About Him and His work of deliverance we would now think. We identify the historical Jesus with God's Son from heaven, and summon three reasons for this belief.

I. JESUS CHRIST CLAIMED TO BE AND WAS ACKNOWLEDGED TO BE THE SON OF GOD:

We confess Jesus as having two natures, divine and human. He was true humanity and true deity. He, being god and man, is the only God-man that ever was or will be. The test is this. Draw a line on a sheet of paper. On one side let God stand completely alone. On the other side allow all other creatures and things to stand. The Christian Faith is that a being of the same essential nature as the eternal God came forth, took upon himself a mysterious self-emptying, crossed the line on the paper and became incarnate in a human body in the womb of a virgin. If anyone does not believe this, whatever the belief may be, it is not Christian. We recognize the identity of the historical Jesus with God's Son is unacceptable to various movements. The dual nature of Christ is excluded by the rationalist, naturalist, the Unitarian, and many cults of our time.

In drafting our Christology, or doctrine of Jesus Christ, we want to note that Jesus clearly claimed to be the eternal Son of God. In the following references we have intolerable presumption, lunacy or truth with reference to the direct statements of Jesus. Jesus claimed to be truth. (John 14:6) He claimed to have the power to forgive sin. (Matthew 9:1-6) Jesus claimed to be the judge of all men. (5:15-22) He claimed to be the way to heaven. (John 14:6) Jesus claimed to be the anointed of God. (Mark 14:60-64) He claimed to be God. (John 8:56-59)

On several occasions Jesus was acknowledged to be God's Son. We see this in the baptismal incident (Matthew 3:17), at the time of temptation (Matthew 4:3, 6-7), at the casting out of demons (Matthew 8:29; Mark 3:11; Luke 4:41), and at the time of Peter's confession (Matthew 16:16). We recognize these claims as important and insist they are not to be denied, diluted or misunderstood.

It is important that we realize that this is not just some fine point of theology to let the theologians worry about. The identification of the historical Jesus with the Son of God is indispensable to His being our deliverer. He could very well have been a religious leader if He was merely Jesus of Nazareth, but He could never have been the redeemer of a world full of people. Only His deity could provide a sacrifice sufficient for the salvation of all people. As a man He could die for men, as God His work took on infinite significance. It is a very great mystery that God somehow took into Himself what we call death. As a man, Jesus had a temporal beginning and a temporal ending.

II. JESUS CHRIST GAVE EVIDENCE OF BEING THE SON OF GOD:

The Encyclopedia Britannica gives 20,000 words to Jesus. Thinking people of all lands and times who have thoroughly investigated the evidence agree that Jesus is the greatest personality that this world has ever seen. Every element of moral and spiritual beauty resides in Jesus. Jesus thought, spoke, and acted at all times as we would expect God to act. Our statement of faith indicates belief in the fact that He was born as no other person has ever been born. A person's teaching and work have a great deal to do with the person's self, his qualifications. Jesus was preserved from original sin by virtue of his being born into this world without a human father. Also, He lived as no human being has ever lived. The miracles of Jesus make sense as demonstrations of the love of God rather than vain display. The words of Jesus are the loftiest ever spoken. Jesus died as no person has ever died. The spiritual sufferings of Christ in death were unique.

A vital Christian belief is that Jesus Christ obtained God's pardon for believing people through His life of sinless obedience to the will of God and His death on the cross. In the Bible's language, He was a sacrifice for sin, a sin-offering, an innocent victim who voluntarily suffered and died for someone else.

Jesus Christ performed a deed, a feat, which merited or earned our pardon. How else could this be done except by the bearing of punishment? The Father measured out of Jesus a kind and degree of infliction that was equivalent in His sight to the evil of people's sin and disobedience. This was the Lord's cup which He drank. Wrath is understood as God's holiness in motion against human sin. It is an inevitable action in a moral universe. Actions which placate that wrath are of a high moral and ethical value. It is important that the ruler of the universe demonstrate clearly at some point in time the punishment of wrongdoing. Calvary is declared in the Bible to be the means by which our guilt is assumed and our punishment rendered. This is called vicarious satisfaction and this is the very heart of the Biblical teaching about atonement. Sin is universal. No one escapes. All are guilty either by original sin or by practice. (Psalm 5:1, 8:1), and the Holy Spirit who provides the dynamic for growth and service. (John 16:12-15)

III. JESUS CHRIST PROVED TO BE THE SON OF GOD:

The most remarkable event in all human history took place nineteen hundred years ago at a garden tomb just outside the wall of Jerusalem. The recorded history of mankind fails to tell of anything like it. That event was the bodily

resurrection of Christ from the dead. No body has ever raised from the dead to remain alive except the body of Jesus. (Note Biblical resuscitations: I Kings 17:17-23; Luke 7:11-15, John 11:33-38) In this way Jesus is declared to be, yea, He proves to be the Son of God. (Romans 1:1-4) His resurrection was a seal of His claims (Matthew 12:38-40), a sign of His innocence (Acts 2:24), a signal to the world (Romans 1:4) and a stamp of the Father's approval (Hebrews 13:20).

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