

Christian Basics

CHAPTER THREE

JESUS CHRIST

HERE IS WHY THIS CHAPTER IS IMPORTANT

- We must understand what the Bible says about the deity of Christ
- We must understand what the Bible says about the humanity of Christ
- We must understand that God's plan for humanity revolves around Christ

“You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon; or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about his being called a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”

- C.S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity*

C.S. Lewis, the great Oxford scholar, was determined to set the record straight: the identity of Jesus Christ is THE crucial issue. There is no Christianity without a divine Christ. Furthermore, the biblical depiction of Jesus clearly leaves no other description of him possible except: God in the flesh (John 1:14). This is an essential point that must be understood. We can settle for nothing less. The following seven sections will tell the story of Jesus Christ.

Section One

JESUS CLAIMED TO BE GOD

Read this account of a conversation Jesus had with his disciples.

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?”

They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

“But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say that I am?”

Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.” Matthew 16:13-17

This was an important issue for Jesus: “Who do people say that I am?” He was not about to let his true identity be a thing of rumor. His true identity must clearly be known.

Some people would like to discount Jesus' own emphasis on his identity. They would like to make Jesus out to be a mere man. Perhaps this will allow them to shelve Jesus along with all the other religious leaders in the world. I would like to begin by asserting very strongly that Jesus did not leave that as an option. Notice that Jesus did not object to Peter's bold proclamation as to his true identity. No one in their right mind would allow for such a description of themselves unless it was true. And it could only be true of one person. Jesus was (and is) that person.

Let's begin by looking at the three titles attributed to Jesus in the above quote from Matthew 16.

The Christ

In Old Testament history when a king was chosen he was anointed with oil. It was a ceremony marking him as the one who would govern for God in the power of the Holy Spirit. For example, Samuel the prophet was told to go and anoint David as king. "So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came upon David in power" (1 Samuel 16:13). The anointing was a symbol of God's power working through the one who was so anointed.

Israel was promised that eventually THE Anointed One would be coming. He would have unusual power and ALSO have the attributes of God. It was promised in many ways that he would bring deliverance and salvation not only to the Jewish nation, but also to the whole world. This was the "Messiah" (the Hebrew term), the "Christ" (the Greek term). Both terms mean the Anointed One.

Jesus wanted to let the religious leaders know that the Christ would not be a mere human being, but much more.

While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?"

"The son of David," they replied.

He said to them, "How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him 'Lord'?

For he says, 'The Lord said to my Lord:

*"Sit at my right hand
until I put your enemies
under your feet."'*

If then David calls him 'Lord,' how can he be his own son?" No one could say a word in reply, and from that day on no one dared to ask him any more questions.

Matthew 22:41-46. (NIV)

The very clear implication was that the Christ was not merely human, but divine. The religious leaders could not answer Jesus. They found his point very disturbing. The religious leaders did not want to openly admit that Jesus was the Christ. The man standing in front of them did not match their preconceived ideas as to whom the Christ (The Anointed One) should be. Many people also struggle today with issues regarding the true identity of Christ.

The Son of Man

When Jesus was on trial the religious leaders were questioning him.

The high priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the son of God."

"Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied. "But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." Matthew 26:63-65 (NIV)

In the eyes of the religious leaders Jesus was, without question, claiming to be God. This was the reason they were seeking his death, "...because you, a mere man, claim to be God" (John 10:33). They were accusing Jesus of blasphemy which was punishable by death.

Jesus quoted from Daniel 7 and attributed to himself the title, "Son of Man." Daniel foretold that the Son of Man would come as a divine being. Read the following and notice the similarities in Jesus' answer. Also notice that the various descriptions of the Son of Man could only be attributed to a divine being and certainly not to any created being.

*In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.
Daniel 7:13-14 (NIV)*

This "Son of Man" was given all authority, glory and sovereign power. He was also worshipped by all people and had a kingdom that would never end. Jesus rightfully took this title for himself, "Son of Man," which had definite, explicit and direct reference to a divine being as foretold by the prophet Daniel.

Son of God

The Koran says, "Far be it from His glory that God should have a son" (Sura 4:169). This is a misunderstanding which came from placing the usual physical and biological connotations on the word, "son," as it related to Jesus. The title, Son of God, does not at all refer to any procreation on God's part. Instead, it refers to essence, sameness and being of the same order. It speaks of close relationship.

There are many examples in the Bible where the term is used in this manner without the thought of procreation. The prophets who belonged to the larger group of prophets were called the "sons of the prophets" (1 Kings 20:35). Jesus pronounced woes upon the religious leaders and said that they were like their father, the devil, because they were just like him (John 8:41-44). Obviously they were not procreated by the devil, but were being just like him, that is, "sons" of the Devil. James and John were called "Sons of Thunder" (Mark 3:17) because it was a good description of their temperaments. In a similar way Barnabas was called "Son of Encouragement" (Acts 4:36) because it was an accurate description of his character. None of these uses of "son" had to do with the biological sense of the word.

In the same way, Son of God is an accurate description of Jesus. "...he was even calling God his own Father making himself equal with God" (John 5:18). As we read earlier in Matthew 26:63 Jesus was questioned about his identity and was asked if he was the Son of God. It is important to notice that Jesus gave an affirmative answer.

Having the correct and accurate portrait of Jesus Christ is an essential part of Christianity. There can be no true and powerful Christianity without a proper view of Jesus. The three titles: Christ, Son of Man and Son of God are part of the "Name" of Jesus which reveal his character and nature.

Beyond the three titles that have been mentioned we must also note that all throughout the gospel accounts Jesus spoke and acted in ways that only God could speak or act. He spoke of his angels (Mt 13:41); he forgave sins (Mk 2:5); he spoke of judging the world (Mt 25:31-46); he claimed to be Lord of the Sabbath (Mk 2:27,28); he claimed to be one with the Father (Jn 14:7-9); he claimed preexistence (Jn 8:58); he had power over life and death (Jn 11:25); he received worship (Jn 20:28) and let's not forget his authority over nature as displayed by his miracles.

Jesus clearly and deliberately presented himself to the world as God in the flesh. His claims were evident in the three titles he took upon himself, by his words and by his actions.

ALIAS ALERT

There are many skeptics, even some who call themselves Christians, who say that Jesus was given assumed names and an assumed identity. They say that he never claimed to be anything other than a mere human teacher. These skeptics state that Jesus' claims to deity were myths that were added later by some of his well-meaning followers. This is an ALERT to make you aware of these kinds of challenges. A quick review of the seven section headings in this chapter will show that this is a challenge that can be easily met by a careful and systematic presentation of the facts as recorded in Scripture.

Section Two

JESUS POSSESSES THE TITLES AND ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

This is a chart depicting ten proofs of the deity of Christ. This chart is merely a convenient way of showing that the deity of Christ is not a minor issue. It should also show that it is not an isolated topic relegated solely to the New Testament, but that it is a teaching of the whole Bible. I have used abbreviations for the books of the Bible in some instances to save space. Also please note that there are many other Scripture verses that could be cited. (You might even find ones more to your liking than the ones I have chosen)

		<u>GOD</u>	<u>JESUS</u>	
1.	ATTRIBUTES OF GOD	Holy Eternal All-knowing All-present	Lev 11:45 Ps 93:2 Jer 17:9,10 Ps 139:7-12	1 Jn 3:5 Heb 13:8 Jn 2:25 Mt 28:20
2.	TITLES OF GOD	Creator Savior I AM Lord God	Isaiah 40:28 Isaiah 45:22 Ex 3:14 Isaiah 45:33 Gen 1:1	Jn 1:8 Jn 4:42 Jn 8:58 Rom 10:9 Heb 1:8
3.	JESUS' OWN CLAIMS	Mark 14:61-64 John 17:5 Revelation 1:8; 22:13 John 8:58		
4.	CLAIMS OF OTHERS	John 20:28 Colossians 2:9 John 1:1 Matthew 16:15,16		
5.	MIRACLES	Luke 7:22 Mark 4:35-41 Matthew 14:15-21 John 11:1-44		
6.	PROPHECY	Born of a woman Born of a virgin Cut off (killed) Seed of Abraham Tribe of Judah House of David Born in Bethlehem Messenger sent Perform miracles Cleanse temple Humiliating death Resurrection Ascension Right hand of God	Gen 3:15 Is 7:14 Dan 9:24 Gen 12:1-3 Gen 49:10 2 Sam 7:12 Micah 5:2 Is 40:3 Is 35:5,6 Malachi 3:1 Psalm 22; Isaiah 53 Ps 2:7; 16:10 Ps 68:8	Gal 4:4 Mt 1:21 Jn 19:30 Mt 1:1 Lk 3:23 Mt 1:1 Mt 2:1 Mt 3:1,2 Mt 9:35 Mt 21:12 Acts 2:24-33 Acts 1:9 Heb 1:3
7.	FORGAVE SINS	Mark 2:5		

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| 8. | CREATOR | John 1:1-3
Colossians 1:15-17 |
| 9. | RECEIVED WORSHIP | Matthew 14:33
John 9:38
Hebrews 1:6 |
| 10. | AUTHORITY | Philippians 2:9-11
Matthew 28:18 |

I hope you can see from this chart there is no way any fair-minded person could say that the Bible portrays Jesus in any other way than of being on equal status with God. If Jesus were not God, we who worship him, would be guilty of false worship. We would all be idol worshipers and Christianity, as it is known biblically, would have to cease.

Section Three **JESUS FULFILLS OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES**

The more our study of the Old and New Testament deepens the more we will grow in our appreciation for the many prophecies concerning Jesus found in the Old Testament. It should strengthen our faith to see them fulfilled in the New Testament. As someone once said, “The New Testament lies hidden in the Old Testament and the Old lies open in the New.” Some of the prophecies about Jesus are often called “Messianic” prophecies because they concern the Messiah.

The book of Matthew starts out citing the genealogy of Christ. “A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham...” (Mt 1:1). Those are two immediate prophetic promises fulfilled at the birth of Christ: that the Christ would be a direct descendant of David and Abraham. Upon further reading in Matthew you will find that he often quotes Old Testament prophecies to enlighten his readers to the importance of their very fulfillment in the life and character of Jesus.

I would like to suggest three ways of studying the Old Testament prophecies concerning Christ:

- 1.) Study prophecies that are plainly recorded as being fulfilled in the New Testament. The premise being that, if an inspired New Testament writer recognized a prophetic fulfillment, we are on safe ground recognizing the same. A careful reading of the book of Matthew provides a good example of how Old Testament prophecies were used in the New Testament.
- 2.) Make a study of the types and prefigurations of Christ that are evident all throughout the Old Testament. This is often called “typology.” This kind of study helps us see the beautiful and profound correspondence between Old Testament situations and how they can be linked to their ultimate fulfillment in Christ.
- 3.) Study the prophecies that have yet to be fulfilled. These would have to do with the second coming of Christ and the events surrounding his return.

Historically fulfilled in the New Testament

The life of Jesus as depicted in the four gospel accounts was a direct fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. For example, it is known that there were over two-dozen prophecies fulfilled in the events involving Jesus' arrest and crucifixion – all in a single day. A few of them are as follows:

Betrayed by a friend	Psalms 42:9	Matthew 26:49-50
Sold for 30 pieces of silver	Zechariah 11:12	Matthew 26:15-16
Forsaken by his disciples	Zechariah 13:7	Mark 14:50
Silent before his accusers	Isaiah 53:7	Matthew 27:12-19
Wounded and bruised	Isaiah 53:5	Matthew 27:26
Beaten and spit upon	Isaiah 50:6	Matthew 26:67
Mocked	Psalms 22:7,8	Matthew 27:31
Hands and feet pierced	Psalms 22:16	Luke 23:33
Crucified with criminals	Isaiah 53:12	Matthew 27:38
Hated him without cause	Psalms 69:4	John 15:25
Gambled for his clothes	Psalms 22:18	John 19:23-24
No bones broken	Psalms 34:20	John 19:33
Pierced in his side	Zechariah 12:10	John 19:34
Buried in rich man's tomb	Isaiah 53:9	Matthew 27:57-60

There were many more prophecies that were foretold in the Old Testament that Jesus fulfilled and that were recorded, as history, in the New Testament. There were too many fulfilled prophecies to credit chance for having anything to do with their fulfillment. They were done in an historical setting that would not allow for their fulfillment to be attributed to myths formed by Christians years later. This was history. This was fact. Let this fact fuel your faith.

Typology

A second way of studying the prophetic portrait of Jesus Christ is to look at the types and prefigurations in the Old Testament.

An example is found in the Feasts of the LORD. The children of Israel were in slavery in Egypt. God sent Moses to free them. The final working of God's plan to free the people was that they were to take the blood of the lamb and place it on the door frames of their houses. When the judgment of God fell on the Egyptians God would see the blood and pass over the houses of the Israelites. God told them that from then on they would celebrate the "Passover" and it would mark the beginning of the new year for them.

We can read in the New Testament that "...Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed" (1 Corinthians 5:7). We can know with full assurance that what took place in history over 3,000 years ago was an act of God and a message of God. The sacrifice of Jesus was prefigured in the act of the Passover. The message is that God will now set us free from our slavery to sin through the sacrifice of Christ. His blood was not placed on the doorframes of houses, but was poured out on the cross. Many more things could be said about this. The important thing to notice is that there are many such prophetic portraits of Christ in the Old Testament. The Passover lamb is just one of them. They have occurred to give us faith and encouragement, and to show the power of God as he worked his plan in history. Here is a brief list that can make for a lifetime of profitable study:

- Adam and Christ Romans 5:14
- The manna in the wilderness John 6:32-35
- The rock in the wilderness 1 Corinthians 10:4
- The bronze serpent John 3:14,15
- The tabernacle and the sacrificial system (a careful study of these last two
- The 7 feasts of the LORD categories will show Jesus clearly portrayed)

I hope this list will stimulate your curiosity to study further this fascinating gold mine of truth that is neatly tucked away in the Bible waiting for any seeker to find.

Prophecies Yet To Be Fulfilled

There is a monument in a park adjacent to the United Nations building in New York City called “The Isaiah Wall.” It reads, “They will beat their swords into plow shares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation nor will they train for war anymore” (Isaiah 2:4). I love this quote. It describes just what the world needs. One thing is missing, however. The prophecy will not come about except by the coming of the Messiah to earth. The second coming of Christ, the Messiah, is yet in the future.

The beginning of verse four of Isaiah chapter two was omitted which reads, “He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for any peoples. [then] They will beat their swords into... etc.” There will be no peace without the Prince of Peace. The “he” that was left out of the quote on The Isaiah Wall was referring to the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

There are many promises that are yet to be fulfilled that involve the Messiah and worldwide peace. There are a multitude of these end times prophecies. Many people are very aware of this fact and there is the promise of hope alive in many people.

A study of future promises like these point to Jesus himself. Below is a partial list:

- Genesis 12:1-3 The whole world will be blessed through the son of Abraham
- Psalm 2 The Son will be given the earth as an inheritance and he will rule.
- Isaiah 11:1-9 The wolf will live with the lamb and everyone will know the LORD.
- Jeremiah 23:5 There will justice over the whole earth.
- Daniel 7:13-14 The Son of Man will come with glory to rule the earth.
- Zechariah 14:9 The LORD will be king over the whole earth.
- Revelation 19 The second coming of Christ.

Section Four
THE DEITY OF CHRIST IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Since the deity of Christ is such an essential issue it would be good to have a few Scriptures for quick reference. I have chosen five, all of which are found in first chapters of various books of the New Testament. These are taken from the NIV.

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| John 1:1 | In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. (Read on: Jesus is the Word) |
| Colossians 1:15-17 | He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. |
| Hebrews 1:3-8 | The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. ... But about the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, will last forever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom.” |
| 2 Peter 1:1 | Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who through the righteousness of <u>our God and Savior Jesus Christ</u> have received a faith as precious as ours. |
| Revelation 1:8 | “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”
[Jesus applied this title to himself in Revelation 22:13] |

I hope this little exercise will give you a quick handle on this important topic. These small portions of Scripture are sometimes called “proof texts.” These proof texts provide a fast way of supporting the teaching on the deity of Christ. However, it is important to remember that the whole teaching of Scripture points to the deity of Christ.

TIME OUT

Take the time to memorize where these proof texts can be found. This will help you as you encounter doubts or confusion about Jesus. It may sound like an elementary exercise, but take the time to practice locating each of these passages in your Bible. As you locate each one, read

the passage carefully before moving on to the next one. Do this for a few days to help lock-in the important teaching regarding the identity of Christ.

It is important to be able to quickly locate clear references to the deity of Christ. You will be glad you have trained yourself to know where these are when you find yourself in a conversation with someone about the gospel. There are five quick references:

John 1 – Colossians 1 – Hebrews 1 – 2 Peter 1 – Revelation 1

Section Five JESUS ROSE FROM THE DEAD

Without the resurrection of Christ we have no Christianity. Read the words of Paul.

If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still dead in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ we are to be pitied more than all men. 1 Corinthians 15:14-19 (NIV)

The fact of the resurrection of Christ is an essential truth and cornerstone of the Christian faith. Without the resurrection there is no Christianity. Everything about the truth and power of our faith in Christ hinges on the fact that Christ did indeed rise from the dead.

Jesus said he would rise again. The occasion was after he had cleansed the temple in Jerusalem. The religious rulers were upset at him and demanded to know by what authority could he be so bold to do such a thing.

Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.” The Jews replied, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?” But the temple he had spoken of was his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken. John 2:19-22 (NIV)

First of all, who could say such a thing? No one in the history of mankind has ever dared to make such a claim. All we would have to do is check their graves and they will all be found occupied. A check on Jesus’ grave will show that it is empty. Moreover, the reality of the resurrection of Christ also proved his authority to cleanse the temple – something else no one but God could do.

Paul said that Jesus “...was declared to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead” (Romans 1:4). Peter said that “...it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him” (Acts 2:24). Peter went on to quote from Psalm 16 where it was prophesied that the Holy One would not be abandoned to the grave nor will he see decay.

The point of this section was to focus on the overall force of the fact that someone rose from the dead. But this was not all. He also ascended to the right hand of the throne of God. No one but a divine being could do such a thing. The resurrection is the cornerstone of the Christian faith. The resurrection should never be overlooked as THE historic proof of the deity of Christ.

Section Six THE MYSTERY OF HIS HUMAN LIMITATIONS

Jesus said, “...the Father is greater than I” (John 14:28). How can the claims that Jesus Christ is equal to God be reconciled with what seems to be evidence to the contrary? It may seem difficult to understand the human limitations of Jesus and his claims of deity until we look deeper into what the Bible says about Jesus.

First we must understand that the Bible very plainly states that Jesus is indeed equal with God in nature and in essence. Both are uncreated, eternal, self-existent beings without beginning or end. The best way to reconcile the humanity of Jesus with his divinity is to realize this fact: Jesus took on an additional nature: a human nature. “The word became flesh and dwelt among us...” (John 1:14). The answer to the mystery of the human limitations of Jesus is found in Philippians chapter two.

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death -- even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:5-11 (NIV)

A very careful reading of this passage will show that Jesus was declared to be “in very nature God.” Then we are told that despite his divine nature he was willing to let go of his divine rights as God. In doing this he did not “grasp,” that is, he was willing to let go of his rights as God. Notice he did not let go of his nature as God. He took on an additional nature – a human nature. In so doing he submitted himself to the limitations common to all humanity (yet without sin).

Jesus went even further than this in his humiliation: “He made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant.” He went still lower: “He humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross.”

It is important to recognize that the context of this passage is about humility. If Jesus, being in very nature God (and of equal standing) could humble himself, then we (being of equal standing with each other) should follow his example of humility in our human relationships. If Jesus was only a mere human then the impact of his willingness to humble himself would not be as dramatic. But the fact that Jesus is equal to God only makes his humility stand out all the more.

Just in case anyone should doubt the teaching regarding the divine nature of Christ, the passage in Philippians 2 ends with Jesus being exalted to the highest place – the place only God can fill. Paul quoted Isaiah 45:23 in the Philippian passage. I will cite Isaiah 45:23 along with verse 22 to set it in context.

*22 Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth;
For I am God, and there is no other.
23 By myself I have sworn,
My mouth has uttered in all integrity
A word that will not be revoked:
Before me every knee will bow;
By me every tongue will swear. Isaiah 45:22-23 (NIV)*

In the Philippian passage we see Jesus as the one before whom the whole world will bow. In the Isaiah passage we see God receiving the same adulation, thereby making them equals. The mystery of Jesus’ human limitations is answered by the fact that his deity was veiled in human flesh. This would make it appear that Jesus might have been less than he was. However, he was only living out the incarnation as a real man until such time as he would rise from the dead and ascend to heaven from where he existed in eternity with God the Father. Jesus knew he would return to the Father and his glory would again be unveiled. “Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began” (John 17:5).

Section Seven **THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST**

Jesus said, “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am” (John 14:3). The teaching of the second coming of Christ is throughout the New Testament. As the disciples witnessed the ascension of the Lord into the clouds they were told, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11).

The amazing event of the second coming will be the final, culminating act of God upon this world. It will be the end of the age. It will be the end of life on earth as we know it. Without getting into the many theories concerning the timing of this great event we can be sure that the second coming of Christ will be God's final curtain on human history. As C.S. Lewis once said, "When the author walks on stage the play is over." As the book of Revelation says, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever" (Revelation 11:15).

CONCLUSION

Remember back when Peter gave his great confession as to the identity of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the Living God? (See section one) Jesus said to Peter that he was "blessed." To be blessed means to be highly favored of God. It was proof that God was working in Peter's life otherwise he could not have made such a confession.

If you can make the same confession as Peter then you too are "blessed" just like Peter. If you can make the same confession as Peter then place your name in the blank. Let this truth sink into your heart.

"Blessed are you, _____, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven" (Matthew 16:17).

If you can call on the name of Christ as your Lord and Savior, and you know him as the Son of the Living God, you are indeed blessed of God. It is proof that God is at work in your life.

The fact of the true identity of Jesus Christ is central to the Christian faith. I suppose that's why we are called "Christians" and that is why we are right to worship Christ. In our first chapter we discovered how important the Bible was in our understanding of the nature of our faith. In this chapter we have discovered how important our understanding of the nature of Christ is to our faith. As someone once said, "A weak view of the Bible will give us a weak view of Christ. A weak view of Christ will give us a weak view of our salvation." It is our salvation that we will study in the next chapter.

TIME OUT

Go over the seven categories that give a description of the nature of Jesus Christ. The more you become aware of these categories that mark the nature and being of Christ the more your faith will increase. Be able to recall these seven highlights that refer to the person and work of Christ.

1. Jesus claimed to be God
2. Jesus possesses the titles and attributes of God
3. Jesus fulfills Old Testament prophecies
4. The deity of Christ is clearly taught in the New Testament
5. Jesus rose from the dead
6. Jesus took on an additional nature in becoming human
7. Jesus will return

QUESTIONS PEOPLE ASK

1. Doesn't the fact that Jesus is called the "firstborn" mean that he is less than God?
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In Old Testament times the firstborn male was given the title of "firstborn." This meant that he would have the first place position in the inheritance rights that were passed down from the patriarch of the family. The person designated firstborn would receive a double inheritance and be the next patriarch (ruler) of the family.

It makes for an interesting study in the lives of Abraham and Isaac to discover that neither of their firstborn sons received the title of firstborn. Ishmael was born first, yet the title went to Isaac who was born second. Jacob was born after Esau, yet Jacob received the title. David was born the eighth son to Jesse, yet he was given the title "firstborn" because he was the supreme ruler, (See Psalm 89:27).

This should give us a clue that birth order does not necessarily determine who is "firstborn." This is because it is not as much about birth as it is about who will rule. In the case of Jesus, he was given the title to show that he had absolute sovereignty. Therefore, when Colossians 1:15 states that Jesus is "the firstborn over all creation" it means that he is Lord of creation.

Remember Jesus did not have to be born in order to exist. He is eternal with the Father. Jesus' relationship within the Trinity will be covered in more detail in the chapter on the Trinity.

2. Why did the Jews reject and kill Jesus?

The overwhelming majority of believers in the beginning of the church were Jews. Jesus was a Jew. All of his disciples were Jews. Almost all of the New Testament writers were Jews. Christianity is Jewish. The Jewish nature of Christianity is often overlooked. It is not completely accurate to say that the Jews rejected Jesus because of the fact that many, many Jews DID receive Jesus as their Savior. It is interesting to note that, at first, the Jewish believers had trouble accepting the non-Jews who placed their faith in Christ. (See Acts 15). This helps to show just how Jewish Christianity was at its beginning stages.

Once this is understood, then we can say the Jews did “officially” reject Jesus. The national leadership in power at the time rejected him. So, in that limited sense, it can be said that the Jews rejected Jesus. However, we must be careful not to cast aspersions on the Jews who rejected Jesus any more than we do on people choosing to reject Jesus today.

With all this in mind it should also be noted that, technically, the Jews did not kill Jesus. The Romans did. It should be further noted that it was all in God’s plan. Peter (a Jew) was quick to point this out as he told his people that Jesus was handed over to the crowds to be killed “by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge” (Acts 2:23). Jesus himself said, “No one takes it [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord” (John 10:18).

This question of the Jews needs to be answered because it can be used as a smoke screen to avoid the inherent responsibility carried by all of humanity regarding the death of Jesus Christ. To foist blame on any one people group is to miss the central issue of the gospel itself. Jesus said, “I have come not to be served, but to serve, and to give my life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45, paraphrased). It is very certain to me that no one kneeling at a church altar for the first time to receive salvation from sin would ever imagine to cast blame on anyone for killing Jesus. Instead the thought would be, “Thank you, Jesus, for dying on the cross for me.”

More questions?

Go to **christianlifetools.org** with your questions. They will be answered ASAP.

Review

1. Explain meaning behind these titles: Christ, Son of God and Son of Man.
2. List three or four attributes and/or prerogatives of God that also can be attributed to Jesus.
3. Cite as many Old Testament prophecies as you can that have found their fulfillment in Christ.
4. Explain what is meant by “typology” and give an example as it relates to Jesus Christ.
5. List three proof texts regarding the deity of Christ.
6. What New Testament passage best explains the mystery of the human limitations of Christ.