

JESUS, THE IMAGE OF GOD

- A. Introduction: We're working on a series aimed at helping us spot religious deception. Jesus said that the years immediately preceding His return will be marked by false christs and false prophets, and that many—including believers—will be deceived by them. Matt 24:4-5; Matt 24:11; Matt 24:23-24
1. Therefore, we're looking at the only completely reliable source of information about Jesus—the written Word of God, the Bible. We're examining who Jesus is, why He came, as well as the message He preached. We want to be certain that we're equipped to recognize and reject counterfeit christs.
 - a. Christians are vulnerable to being deceived by false christs and false prophets for several reasons.
 1. Bible reading is at an all time low amongst Christians (even those in the pulpit), leaving them with no objective standard by which to judge those who claim to preach Christ.
 2. We live in and are influenced by a culture that now bases truth on how we feel about something rather than on the objective facts in the situation. This practice has seeped into the church, as professing Christians become more and more prone to putting dreams, visions, and so called words from the Lord on a par with or even above the Bible.
 3. Much of the popular teaching today bears little resemblance to New Testament Christianity. It's a feel good message about how Jesus came to help you live a prosperous, abundant life. It gives people false expectations which lead to disillusionment when life gets hard.
 - b. What if someone you respect told you that they had a dream and, in it, the Lord gave them wonderful revelations, along with a deeper understanding of who Jesus really is.
 1. Suppose everyone is saying that this person is so anointed that, even though his revelations are very different, they must be from God. What if it just feels right to you?
 2. How would you assess and judge his message and his revelations? Could you do it? Are you competent enough in the Scriptures to recognize false teaching?
 3. The apostle Paul warned of false apostles that transform themselves into apostles of Christ, just as Satan masquerades as an angel of light. II Cor 11:13-15
 2. Last week we began to talk about the fact that many inaccurate as well as heretical doctrines come out of not understanding that He is the God-man. We're going to continue our discussion in this lesson.
- B. We've made this point in previous lessons. To understand who Jesus is we first need some understanding of the Godhead or the nature of God. Acts 17:29; Rom 1:20; Col 2:9
1. The Bible reveals that God is One God (one Being) who simultaneously manifests as three distinct Persons—the Father, the Son (or the Word), and the Holy Spirit. These three Persons are distinct, but not separate. They co-inhere or share one Divine Nature.
 - a. God is not one God who manifests three ways—sometimes as the Father, sometimes as the Son, and sometimes as the Holy Spirit. You can't have one without the other. The Father is all God. The Son is all God. The Holy Spirit is all God.
 - b. This is beyond our comprehension at this point in our existence. All efforts to explain the Godhead fall short. We can only accept it and then rejoice in the wonder of Almighty God.
 2. Two thousand years ago the Word entered time and space and, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, became fully man without ceasing to be fully God. He became the God-man (*theanthropos*), the Son of God (the only begotten or unique Son). Matt 1:22-23; John 1:14
 - a. I Tim 3:16—Paul, who was personally taught the gospel that he preached by Jesus Himself (Gal 1:11-12) referred to this incarnation as a mystery: “Undoubtedly the mystery of our religion is a great wonder: He was made visible in human form” (Williams). Paul further wrote that:
 1. Phil 2:6-8—Jesus humbled Himself by divesting Himself of His rightful dignity as God and taking on the form or nature (*morphe*) of man. He veiled His deity, voluntarily limited

- Himself. He did not use His divine attributes to live on earth.
2. Heb 2:9—He lowered Himself. The word lowered means to lessen in rank or influence; to make lower. Jesus did this so that He could taste death or die for the sins of men.
- b. The fact that Jesus is called the Son of God sometimes confuses people. They mistakenly believe that because He is the Son He is a created being or that He is somehow less than God.
 1. Jesus is not a created being. He is eternal (without beginning or end) and infinite not limited by time and space). He pre-existed with the Father. John 1:1-2
 2. Jesus is the Son of God, not because He was born in Bethlehem, but because He is God.
 - A. In Bible times, the phrase son of was often used to mean “one who possesses his father’s qualities or of the order of.” I Kings 20:35; II Kings 2:3;5;7;15; Neh 12:28).
 - B. When Jesus said He was the Son of God, He was saying that He is God. That’s exactly how the Jews to whom Jesus spoke understood it. John 5:17-18; John 10:30-33
 - c. When Jesus entered this world He took on flesh or a full human nature. He didn’t stop being God, nor did He turn into a man. He was not God temporarily living in a human body. He was and is God become man without ceasing to be God. Matt 1:23-24; Acts 2:22; Acts 17:31; I Tim 2:5; etc.
 1. Jesus is not the Father. Over 50 times in the New Testament the Father and the Son are seen as distinct within the same verse. II Cor 1:3; Phil 2:11; I John 2:22; etc.
 2. When Jesus prayed to the Father, if Jesus is also the Father, then He was praying to himself. And, when talked to and about His Father as He frequently did, then He was talking to Himself about Himself. John 5:19; John 8:29; etc.
 3. When Jesus said “If you’ve seen Me you’ve seen the Father”, He was not saying that He is the Father. Rather, He showed what the Father is like by speaking the words of the Father and doing the works of the Father by the power of the Father in Him. John 14:10-11; Acts 10:38
3. In Col 1:15-18 Paul makes a classic statement about who Jesus is. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature.
 - a. v15—The word image (*eikon*) means the very substance or essential embodiment of something or someone. Jesus is the very substance or essence of God. Who is a derived reproduction and manifestation of absolute deity (Wuest); He is the exact likeness of the unseen God (Amp).
 - b. v15—Firstborn does not mean a created being. That would be a complete contradiction of the statement just made and the verses which follow. Firstborn means preeminent (i.e. the First Lady).
 1. v16—This passage is emphasizing the preeminence or superiority of Christ. He is the Creator of all because He is God. Gen 1:2; Isa 42:5; Isa 45:18; etc.
 2. He existed before all things were created and sustains them all. v17—And He Himself existed before all things and in Him all things consist—cohere, are held together (Amp).
 - c. v18—Jesus is not dependent on anything or anyone for His existence. He is the beginning (*arche*) which means the origin or actual cause of creation. He is the uncreated First Cause.
 4. Jesus is the God-man. He is God become man without ceasing to be God. While on earth He did not live as God. He lived as man in dependence on God as His Father.
 - a. When the Word left Heaven and incarnated, He humbled Himself and took a role of submission to the Father as part of the implementation of the plan of redemption. Difference in function does not mean inferiority in nature.
 - b. People misapply Bible verses regarding Jesus because they fail to determine if the passage is referring to Jesus’ human nature or His divine nature. For example:
 1. John 14:28; John 10:29—When Jesus said that His Father is greater than all, greater than Him He was speaking of His human nature. How do we know (in addition to everything we’ve already said)? Because His other statements confirm His deity.
 - A. Read John 10:30—Jesus said: I and my Father are one. “My” is not in the original

Greek text. It literally reads: I and the Father are one.

- B. I and the Father are one in essence (Wuest); in all the attributes of the Godhead (Clarke).
 - 2. Some misinterpret John 20:17 to mean that Jesus is created being because He acknowledged God as His Father and God. Jesus was speaking out of His humanity, His human nature.
 - A. Jesus called God His God because the Man Jesus was not an atheist—His God was God.
 - B. Note that just a few verses later, when one of His apostles called Him God (*theos*), Jesus did not correct Him, but instead blessed Him. John 20:28-29
- C. Almighty God is both transcendent (separate from, beyond) and imminent (close at hand). He is both incomprehensible, yet knowable. And He wants to be known (Jer 9:23-24). God has progressively revealed Himself to men as He works out His plan of redemption, His plan to have a family through Jesus.
- 1. Last week we discussed the fact that no human being in our present mortal, corrupt state can see God’s face or the fullness of His perfection, one, because He is invisible, but also because we can’t bear it.
 - a. Consequently, God has permitted men to see Him only in a form that they can bear. When Moses asked to see God’s glory, He was only permitted to see God’s back parts. Ex 33:18-23
 - b. This is a topic for another day, but for now, consider this point. Jesus (the Word) is the visible manifestation of the Invisible God in both the Old and the New Testament. He made numerous appearances to His people in the Old Testament before He took on flesh, before He incarnated.
 - 1. I Cor 10:1-4—Jesus went with the Israelites to Canaan after their deliverance from slavery in Egypt. The Rock that followed them (literally, went with them) was Christ.
 - 2. I Cor 10:9—Israel got into trouble when they tempted Christ along the way by doubting His care of and provision for them.
 - 3. Heb 11:24-26—Moses chose to suffer affliction with his people because he deemed the reproaches of Christ better than the riches of Egypt. Moses knew Preincarnate Jesus.
 - 2. Jesus took on flesh so that He could die for our sins. But leading up to the crucifixion, He had another important mission—to reveal more of God to men. Jesus is the full revelation of God to man. He is the visible manifestation of God to created beings.
 - a. Heb 1:1-2—God has spoken to us in these last days “in One who by nature is [His] Son (Wuest). (The word His is not in the original Greek. Remember what Son of meant to those people.)
 - 1. Heb 1:3—Jesus, in His incarnation, is the full revelation of God to man. Express image, in the Greek, has the idea of a stamp or impress such as in a coin or a seal. All the features in the seal correspond to the imprint made by it.
 - 2. An exact representation of his very being (Rotherham); very image of his substance (ASV); flawless expression of the nature of God (Phillips); is the copy of his being (Beck).
 - b. John 1:18—No man has seen God, but that the Only Begotten (unique) Son has declared Him.
 - 1. The Greek word translated seen means to stare at, and by implication, to discern clearly. It’s more than the act of seeing. It’s the actual perception of an object. It is translated perceive (Acts 8:23), seen or known (I John 3:6), and take heed (Matt 18:10).
 - 2. John 1:18—Absolute deity in its essence no one has ever yet seen. God uniquely-begotten, He who is in the bosom of the Father, that One fully explained deity. (Wuest)
 - 3. At the conclusion of what we call the Last Supper Jesus He prayed to God the Father. John 17
 - a. v1-2—The time has come. Glorify (ascribe glory or honor to) your Son so He can give glory back to you. You have given Him power (authority) over all flesh to give eternal life to men.
 - 1. v3—And this is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth. (NLT)
 - 2. v4-5—I have glorified you on earth and finished the work you gave me to do. I have given you glory (Basic); I have brought you honor upon the earth (Phillips). Glorify Me with the glory

that I had with you before the world began. (Jesus knew a pre-existence with the Father.)

- b. v6—I have declared your name. Name (*onoma*) was used for an actual name, but it was also used for all that a name implies—authority, character, rank, majesty, power, excellence. v5—I have manifested Your name—I have revealed Your very Self, Your real Self (Amp).
 1. First century Jews knew God by the name Jehovah and all of the other names given in the Old Testament. But Jesus gave them a new name for God: Father.
 2. Old Covenant men and women did not refer to God as Father. They called Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob their Father. John 6:31; John 8:53; Luke 16:24; etc.
 - A. God was the Father of Israel in general as their Creator, Deliverer, and covenant Maker (Ex 4:22-23). But they had no concept of an individual Father-son relationship between God and man. They were in fact servants of God as opposed to sons who were born of God (I John 5:1; John 1:12; John 3:3-5; etc.). (No one was born of God before the Cross.)
 - B. Remember, the Pharisees were enraged when Jesus called God His Father. They said that it was blasphemy for a man to speak of God in such terms. John 5:17-18; John 10:30-33
4. Jesus came to earth in part to reveal a previously veiled aspect of God’s character and plan—He is a Father Who wants sons and daughter. Eph 1:4-5
 - a. Through His teachings, Jesus introduced the idea of a God as a Father Who cares for His children. That was a revolutionary concept to His audience.
 1. Matt 6:9-13—When Jesus gave the model for prayer that we call the Lord’s Prayer, He wasn’t giving us a prayer to memorize and recite. He was presenting the idea of looking to God as your Father and going to Him for help and provision.
 2. Matt 6:25-34—Jesus told His followers that as the Father cares for birds and flowers. Much more will He take care of His sons and daughters as they seek Him and His righteousness.
 3. Matt 7:7-11—Jesus authorized us to think of God as a Father Who is better than the best earthly father.
 - b. Jesus, in His humanity, demonstrated the kind of relationship the Father wants to have with His sons. Jesus knew that the Father loved Him, was with Him, heard His prayers, and would provide for Him. John 6:11; John 11:42; John 16:32; John 17:26; Matt 26:53; etc.
5. The Word took on a human nature so that He could die for our sins and make it possible for sinners to be transformed into holy, righteous sons and daughters of God.
 - a. In His humanity Jesus demonstrated the kind of sons God wants. Jesus is the pattern for the family
 1. Rom 8:29—For those whom He foreknew—of whom He was aware and loved beforehand—He also destined from the beginning (foreordaining them) to be molded into the image of His Son [and share inwardly His likeness] (Amp).
 2. Rom 8:29—That He (Jesus) might become the first-born among many brethren: the eldest among many brothers (20th Cent). Firstborn has the idea of the chief or the head of all the redeemed—the first Man to come out of death.
 - b. Because of Jesus’ sacrifice we can be, are being, and will be glorified—raised to a heavenly dignity and condition [state of being]—sons of God like Jesus (Rom 8:30, Amp). (lessons for another day)
- D. Conclusion: We have more to say next week, but consider one thought as we close. God and man came together in Jesus to show us what God is like and to show us what sons of God look like.
 1. I Cor 1:9—We have been called into fellowship with the Son. The word fellowship comes from a word meaning to share in, participate. Who called you to share in the life of His Son (NEB); companionship and participation with His Son (Amp). This is not participation in His deity. It is participation in His humanity as a glorified son or daughter—one who is fully glorifying and pleasing to our Father.
 2. This is possible because God became fully man without ceasing to be God. Lots more next week!