

JESUS: THE CHRIST AND THE SON OF GOD

- A. Introduction: A few days before Jesus was crucified, He made a lengthy statement in which He outlined some of the signs that will indicate His return to this world is near. One of those signs is false christs and false prophets who show great signs and wonders as they proclaim false gospels. Matt 24:4-5; 11; 24
1. Jesus' second coming draws closer with each passing day. Are you familiar enough with Jesus and the gospel He proclaimed to be able to recognize false christs, prophets, and gospels? Would you be able to recognize a counterfeit supernatural event?
 - a. If you are not familiar with Jesus as He is revealed in the New Testament, and with the gospel as He He preached it according to the New Testament, then you are not equipped to deal with the religious deception ahead.
 - b. Therefore, to make certain that we are equipped, we're beginning this year with series on the importance of becoming a regular, systematic Bible reader, especially the New Testament.
 1. To read regularly means to read for 15-20 minutes as often as possible. To read systematically means to read each book of the New Testament from beginning to end over and over.
 2. Don't worry about what you don't understand. Don't stop to look up words. (You can do that at another time). Just keep reading. You're reading to become familiar with the text, because understanding comes with familiarity, and familiarity comes with regular, repeated reading.
 2. To motivate you to read and to increase your confidence in what you read, we are also looking at how the Bible came into existence—especially the New Testament. The New Testament documents (27 books and letters) were written by eyewitnesses of Jesus (or close associates of eyewitnesses).
 - a. These men walked and talked with Jesus (the real one). They saw Him die and then saw Him alive again. What they witnessed transformed their lives. Their testimony was: We saw and heard Him! We touched Him! We ate and drank with Him! Acts 2:32; Acts 10:38-41; I John 1:1-3; etc.
 - b. Christianity is based on a verifiable historical reality—Jesus' resurrection. When His resurrection is examined with the same criteria that is used to assess other historical events, or in the same way evidence is examined in a court of law, the evidence for the resurrection is powerful and convincing.
 3. Luke 24:46-48—On the day Jesus rose from the dead He commissioned His apostles (the eyewitnesses) to tell the world what they had seen. And He gave them a vital message to proclaim.
 - a. Jesus commissioned them to preach repentance and remission of sins. Repentance means to change one's mind or purpose and turn from sin. Because of Jesus' death and resurrection, remission (or the wiping out) of sin is now available to all who repent and turn to Jesus.
 - b. These men followed Jesus' instructions and, after He returned to Heaven, they went out to proclaim what they witnessed to the world. The apostles spread their message orally at first because they lived in an oral culture, one in which information and events were memorized and shared orally.
 1. They did not set out to write a religious book. They began to write the documents that make up the New Testament as part of their efforts to proclaim Jesus' death and resurrection.
 2. As news of Jesus' death and resurrection spread, new believers wanted more than one oral testimony or teaching when an original apostle visited their city. Written documents greatly expanded their reach and insured that their eyewitness testimony would be preserved.
 - A. The four New Testament books known as the gospels give historical information about Jesus from His birth to His public ministry, crucifixion, resurrection, and return to Heaven.
 - B. The epistles were letters written to people who became believers through the efforts of the apostles. They give further explanation of teachings done in person, answer questions people had, and dealt with moral and doctrines issues that arose.
 - c. These eyewitnesses preached and wrote so that men and women would believe on Jesus—trust Him for salvation from sin so that they can live forever with Almighty God.

1. John 20:30-31—Jesus’ disciples saw him do many other miraculous signs besides the ones recorded in this book. But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in him you will have life (NLT).
2. These men wrote so that people will believe that Jesus is the Messiah (the Christ) and the Son of God. In this lesson we’re going to look at what those two terms mean. Our goal is to gain a fuller understanding of who Jesus is—according to the Bible.

B. Jesus professed to be both the Messiah (the Christ) and the Son of God (John 4:25-26; John 9:35-38). And, His first followers came to believe that Jesus was and is the Messiah and the Son of God (Matt 16:13-17). What does it mean that Jesus is both the Messiah (the Christ) and the Son of God?

1. One of the most important points in accurately understanding the Scripture is the fact that everything in the Bible was written by someone to someone about something.
 - a. Therefore, we must always consider what the text would have meant to the people to whom it was first spoken or written. To determine what it means that Jesus is the Christ (Messiah) and the Son of God, we have to examine how first century men and women understand those terms.
 - b. When the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and informed her that she would give birth to the Son of God, the angel instructed her to name Him Jesus, which means Savior (Luke 1:31). Joseph (to whom she was betrothed) received the same instruction (Matt 1:21).
 1. Christ is a title that was added to Jesus’ given name. Christ is from the Greek word *Christos* which means anointed. When the Old Testament was translated from Hebrew into Greek in the 3rd and 2nd century BC the Hebrew word for anointed (*mashiyach*) was translated *christos*.
 - A. Among the Jews, anointing with oil was a symbol of consecration for sacred purposes. Priests, kings, and prophets were all anointed with oil when they were set apart for those offices. Anointing with oil was also a symbol of endowment with the Holy Spirit.
 - B. Those Old Testament offices foreshadowed Jesus as our High Priest, Prophet, and King. Following His baptism, Jesus was anointed with the Holy Ghost. Matt 3:16-17; Acts 10:38
 - C. The Old Testament prophet Daniel also used the word *mashiyach* (anointed) in a prophecy about the promised Redeemer (Savior). Dan 9:25-26
 2. The KJV renders the Hebrew word as Messiah, the Anointed One. The Greek form of the word Messiah (Messias) is used twice in the New Testament (John 1:41; John 4:25). The name Christ (*Christos*) is used instead of Messiah throughout the rest of the New Testament.
 - c. The name Son of God is used two ways in regard to Jesus. It refers to the fact that Jesus is God Incarnate (Matt 14:33; Matt 16:16; John 1:49). It also refers to the fact that God is the Father of Jesus’ humanity (Luke 1:32-35).
 1. Two thousand years ago, God entered time and space, took on flesh (a full human nature) and was born into this world. Jesus is God become man without ceasing to be God. Jesus is fully God and fully man. While on earth He lived as a man in dependence on His Father God. John 1:1; John 1:14
 2. Jesus became a man (took on flesh) so that He could die as a sacrifice for sin. Jesus’ death opened the way for men and women to be freed from the penalty and power of sin and restored to God through faith in Christ. Heb 2:14-15; I Pet 3:18; John 1:12-13
 3. In the culture Jesus was born into, son often meant on the order of or one possessing his father’s qualities (I Kings 20:35; II Kings 2:3; Neh 12:28). They understood the phrase to mean sameness of nature and equality of being (Eph 2:2-3; Eph 5:6-8). That’s why the Jews took up stones to stone Jesus when He referred to God as His Father (John 10:33; John 5:18; etc.).
2. Before we continue, we need to make some comments about God. The Bible reveals that God is one God (One Being) who simultaneously manifests as three distinct Persons—the Father, the Word (the

Son), and the Holy Spirit.

- a. These three Persons are distinct, but not separate. They co-inhere or share one Divine nature. They are Persons in the sense that they are self aware and aware of and interactive with each other.
 1. 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. Where the Father is, so is the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Father is all God and so is the Son and the Holy Spirit.
 2. This is beyond our comprehension because we are talking about the infinite God who is eternal and without limits—and we are finite or limited beings. All efforts to explain the nature of God fall short. We can only accept what the Bible reveals and rejoice in the wonder of God.
- b. My intention in this lesson is not to do a teaching on what is referred to as the doctrine of the Trinity (the oneness of Being and distinctiveness of Persons in the Godhead). My goal is to show clearly that Jesus is God and that His eyewitnesses knew it and believed it.
 1. This transcendent, infinite, invisible God wants to be known. He has revealed Himself to us through His Word, the Living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is God's clearest expression of Himself to mankind. He is the visible manifestation of the invisible God. Col 1:15
 2. Heb 1:3—He (Jesus) is the perfect imprint and very image of [God's] nature (Amp). Very image in Greek refers to the imprint made by a stamp. Jesus is the exact representation of the Father, the same essence with the Father, since He is God. Col 2:9
3. Paul the Apostle was not one of the original apostles. Jesus appeared to Paul two to three years after the resurrection and Paul became a believer and a zealous preacher of what he saw, as well as what Jesus taught him in subsequent appearances. Acts 9:1-6; Acts 26:16; Gal 1:11-12
 - a. Paul wrote 14 of the 21 epistles (letters) in the New Testament. In his epistles, Paul recorded several creeds (statements of beliefs) and hymns which date to within two or three years of Jesus' resurrection.
 - b. These oral traditions were in use before the New Testament documents were written. These early traditions tell us what Jesus' followers believed about Him from the very beginning—right after He returned to Heaven—before any inspired writings were penned.
 - c. Consider one, Phil 2:6-11. This creed makes it clear that the first Christians knew that Jesus is God become man without ceasing to be God.
 1. v6-7—According to this creed, Jesus was in the **form** of God, but took on the form of a slave and was made in the **likeness** of men.
 - A. The Greek word translated **form** (*morphe*) literally means shape. When used figuratively it means nature. A number of Bible translations translate the word that way—Who being in very nature God (NIV; 20th Century; Montgomery); For he, who has always been God by nature (Phillips); He was God (NLT);
 - B. The word **likeness** describes more than mere similarity or resemblance. Jesus truly became man. Jesus differed from the rest of humanity only in the sense that He was sinless, not only in behavior but in nature—like Adam and Eve before they sinned.
 2. v8—He was found in **fashion** as a man. Fashion refers to external conditions. In outward appearance or condition, Jesus was no different than any other man. Jesus looked like a Jewish carpenter. He needed food and sleep. He was tempted to sin and He died. Mark 4:38; Mark 11:12; Heb 4:15; etc.
 - A. He humbled Himself and took a lower, subordinate position for the purpose of securing our redemption through His death on the Cross. He limited Himself to all the limitations of being human.
 - B. Because the Holy Spirit formed the human nature of Jesus in the womb of Mary, He did not partake of fallen human nature. God was the Father of His humanity. Luke 1:35; Heb 10:5

4. You and I live two thousand years after Jesus came to earth. There have been and are countless debates about Jesus' nature. Is He God? Is He man? Is He less than the Father?
 - a. The eyewitnesses didn't get caught up in all of that. Jesus' original followers knew that He was and is the God-man (fully God, fully man). He is the fulfillment of what was promised in the Old Testament, Emmanuel, God with us. Isa 7:14; Matt 1:22-23
 - b. Paul recorded another creed in I Tim 3:16. A complete explanation of this verse requires another lesson. For now, note one point that is directly connected to our topic: Great is the mystery of godliness—God was manifested in the flesh.
 1. The Bible is progressive revelation. God has gradually revealed Himself and His plan of redemption through the pages of Scripture until the full light given in Jesus. Mystery refers to something above human insight that can't be known unless God reveals it. Godliness is used figuratively in this verse to mean the gospel plan.
 2. God's plan was to incarnate and die for the sins of men and women. The Old Testament hinted at this plan, but it wasn't clearly revealed until it took place two thousand years ago.
 - c. Luke 20:41-44—Jesus, in one of the many encounters where the religious leaders of His day tried to trap Him in His words, posed a question that stumped them: How can the Christ be David's Lord and David's son? How do you explain that? They couldn't, but we can.
 1. God (David's Lord) took on a human nature and was born into the family of David. Through the mystery of the Incarnation, the Christ is both David's Lord and David's son.
 2. The first Christians witnessed Jesus confirm everything He claimed about Himself by rising from the dead—including the fact that He is God become man without ceasing to be God. (Jesus) was declared to be the Son of God by His resurrection from the dead (Rom 1:4, NIV).
- C. Conclusion: Jesus warned His followers that prior to His second coming false christs and false prophets who perform signs and wonders will come on the scene and deceive many. Matt 24:4-5; 11; 24
1. We have a tendency to think of false christs as crazy people that no one will take seriously (especially us). If that is true, then why does Jesus warn us to beware that no one deceives us?
 - a. Satan is able to transform himself into an angel of light, and his workers can appear as ministers of righteousness (II Cor 11:13-15). Our only defense against deception is the Truth—the Living Word, the Lord Jesus, Who is revealed in the written Word, the Bible. John 14:6; John 17:17
 - b. Federal agents who work to stop people from making and using counterfeit money don't study fake money. They study genuine money to the point that they can instantly recognize a fake. We need to do the same with Jesus. We must get to know Him as He truly is according to the Bible.
 2. There are difficult times ahead for this world and there will be increasing pressure to abandon the real Jesus. In John 6 Jesus made a lengthy statement about the fact that He is the Bread of Life and that His followers must eat His flesh and drink His blood. (He was speaking figuratively of the union that will occur between Himself and those who believe on Him. Lessons for another day.)
 - a. The point for our topic is this: Many of Jesus' disciples did not understand His words and quit following Him. This led Him to ask the twelve apostles if they too would leave. John 6:67
 - b. John 6:68-69—Peter answered: Where would we go? You have the words that give eternal life. We believe and are sure that you are the Christ, the Son of the living God.
 1. Because they knew Jesus as He truly is, they had the confidence to resist the pressures of a hard teaching, the crowd walking away, and being left in the minority.
 2. When you know Jesus as He truly is you will not only be able to recognize false christs who preach false gospels, you'll have the courage to stay true to Him no matter the pressure, no matter the cost.
 3. We have much more to say next week!!