The Person and Work

Of Jesus Christ

**The Omega Institute of Bible, Theology, and Apologetics**

Student Notes

*by*

Dr. Johnny Pressley

Cincinnati Bible Seminary

*Cincinnati Christian University*

**CONTENTS**

The Deity of Christ

1. Jesus’ Claim to Deity 4

2. Pauline Statements of Deity 6

3. Johannine Statements of Deity 10

4. Miscellaneous Statements of Deity 12

5. Messianic Prophecies of a Divine King 16

6. Messianic Prophecies of God Among Us 20

The Humanity of Christ

7. The Human Nature of Christ 27

8. The Growth and Development of Christ 34

9. Jesus’ Spiritual Activity 37

10. Jesus’ Messianic Role 42

The Incarnation of Christ

11. The Incarnation 45

12. The Son of Man 49

13. Divine Restraints 54

14. Redemption Roles 58

15. Erroneous Ideas Regarding the Incarnation 63

The Mission of Christ

16. Jesus’ Primary Mission 71

17. Jesus’ Secondary Tasks 74

18. The Gospel Drama 78

The Death of Christ

19. The Substitute Atonement 82

20. The Death of Christ 86

21. Images of Calvary 92

22. Erroneous Ideas Regarding Christ’s Death 97

The Resurrection of Christ

23. Jesus’ Resurrection 103

24.The Ultimate Victory 106

25. Jesus’ Ascension 109

Bibliography 112

***No. 1***

**JESUS’ CLAIM TO DEITY**

**Equality With God**

**1. Jesus claimed abilities that belong exclusively to God**

a. Eternal pre-existence (John 8:56-59)

b. The authority to forgive sins (Mark 2:5-11; Luke 7:47-50)

c. The power to raise the dead on resurrection day (John 11:25)

d. The authority to impose eternal judgment upon all humanity (John 5:21-29)

**2. Jesus declared that he is equal to God**

a. Equal in honor (John 5:22-23)

b. United in identity (John 10:30-31; 14:8-11)

**The Son of God**

**1. Jewish uses of the phrase “son of God”**

a. As a figurative reference to angels (Job 1:6)

b. As an honorary title for their kings (2 Sam. 7:14)

c. As a religious reference to the Jewish people (Exod. 4:22-23; Psalm 82:6)

d. Not as an actual divine being

**2. Greek uses of the phrase “son of God”**

a. As an honorary title for a public dignitary

b. As a reference to a very religious person (favored by God)

1) As the centurion referred to Jesus (Matt. 27:54 and Luke 23:47)

2) As Pilate imagined Jesus (John 19:7-9)

**3. Jesus used the phrase “Son of God” in a way that implied deity**

a. Jesus acknowledged that his use of the phrase “Son of God” was different from the common usage

1) The Old Testament Jews were called “gods” in a figurative sense (John 10:34-35)

2) But as a person who came to earth from the presence of God, Jesus was “Son of God” in a manner beyond human analogies (John 10:36)

b. The negative reaction of the Jewish leaders confirms that they understood Jesus to be claiming deity when he referred to himself as Son of God

1) They desired to stone him to death for blasphemy (John 5:17-18)

2) They sentenced him to death for blasphemy (Luke 22:70-71; John 19:7)

3) Neither the Jewish nor the Greek usage of “son of God” would have been sufficient grounds to declare blasphemy

**4. Jesus reaffirmed his claim to deity in the way he handled the blasphemy charge**

a. It is evident that the Jewish leaders understood Jesus to be claiming deity in that they often charged him with blasphemy (Mark 2:5-7; John 5:17-18; 8:58-59; 10:30-33)

b. The negative reaction of the Jewish leaders confirms our modern interpretation of Jesus’ statements as a claim to deity

c. Jesus’ response to the blasphemy charge reaffirmed his claim to deity

1) He did not defend himself by saying he had been misunderstood

2) He reinforced his claim to deity

a) By a display of supernatural powers to confirm his claim (Mark 2:5-11)

b) By boldly claiming a power and authority equal to God (John 5:17-18, 20-23)

c) By claiming to be “Son of God” in the ultimate sense (John 10:30-38)

d. The significance of the silence of Jesus at his trials

1) Jesus forced the Jewish leaders to focus their attention upon the charge of blasphemy

a) During the Jewish trials Jesus refused to respond to any charge except the issue of his claim to be “Son of God” (Matt. 26:62-66)

b) During the Roman trials Jesus refused to respond to any of the lesser charges presented by the Jewish leaders (Matt. 27:12-14)

c) Jesus’ silence before Pilate forced the Jewish leaders to finally reveal their true charge of blasphemy (John 19:6-7)

2) Jesus apparently wanted the key issue to be his claim to deity

***No. 2***

**PAULINE STATEMENTS**

**OF DEITY**

**Colossians 2:9**

**1. The deity of Christ affirmed**

a. Paul acknowledges the physical appearance and nature of Jesus

b. But declares that Jesus also possessed the full nature of deity

1) The Greek phrase: *pan to pleroma tes theotetos*

2) English translation: “all the fullness of deity”

3) *Theotetos*: The abstract concept of “Godness,” i.e., the nature of God (“deity”)

4) *Pleroma*: A complete and full package of something (“fullness”)

5) *Pan*: All (thus intensifying the force of *pleroma*)

**2. The context for this deity claim**

a. Paul affirms the authority of Christ

1) Christ created everything that exists for his own pleasure (Col. 1:16)

2) He acts as “head of the church” (Col. 1:18)

3) He is reconciling all of creation back to God (Col. 1:20)

4) He has the authority to supersede the rules and regulations of the old Mosaic covenant and man’s traditions (Col. 2:8-10)

b. Paul justifies the authority of Christ

1) Because he has “all the fullness of deity” (Col. 1:19)

a) The Greek phrase: *pan to pleroma*

b) English translation: “all the fullness”

2) Because he has “all the fullness of deity” (Col. 2:9)

**Galatians 1:1**

**1. The key indicator of the deity of Jesus**

a. Paul puts Jesus on a level with God the Father

b. Paul indicates that Jesus and God are in a different category from mankind

**2. The subtle nature of this deity claim**

a. It is noteworthy that Paul refers to the deity of Jesus in an incidental manner

b. It is a common practice with the New Testament writers to treat the idea of the deity of Jesus as a common assumption among Christians rather than as a thesis to be proven

**Philippians 2:6**

**1. Key indicators of the deity of Jesus**

a. Jesus “existed in the form of God”

b. Jesus possessed “equality with God”

**2. The nature of deity**

a. Before the incarnation, Jesus already possessed the full nature of God

1) The Greek phrase: *en morphe theou huparchon*

2) English translation: “he existed in the form of God”

3) *Huparchon*: One’s natural state of being (“he existed as . . .”)

4) *En morphe theou*: The nature of deity (“in the form of God”)

a) *Morphe*: Those necessary qualities that make a thing what it is (i.e., those things a thing must possess in order to be what it is and not something else)

b) For Jesus to exist as the *morphe* of God means he possessed the attributes that make God “God”

b. The New International Version tries to convey the idea with the phrase “being in very nature God”

**3. Equality with God**

a. Before coming to earth in the incarnation, Jesus already possessed equality with God

1) The Greek phrase: *ouch harpagmon hegesato to einai isa theo*

2) English translation: “he did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped”

3) *To einai isa*: To be equal to something else (“equality with”)

4) *Harpagmon*: To cling to something you already possess (“a thing to be grasped”)

5) It does not carry the idea of reaching for something you wish to possess

b. Jesus was not thinking about “reaching for” deity, but was already “grasping” deity

**4. The context for this deity claim**

a. Paul affirms the starting point for the incarnation event (Phil. 2:7-8)

b. Paul brings the story of Christ full circle to his return to the heavenly throne with divine authority over all created things (Phil. 2:9-11)

**Romans 9:5**

**1. The deity of Christ affirmed**

a. Christ is spoken of as the God (*theos*) whom we should bless forever

b. Christ is spoken of as being “over all” creation

c. Some modern translations try to make the deity statement very clear

“Christ, who is God over all, forever praised” (*New International Version*)

“Christ, who is over all, the eternally blessed God” (*New King James Version*)

 “Their ancestors were great people of God, and Christ himself was a Jew as far as his human nature is concerned. And he is God, who rules over everything and is worthy of eternal praise! Amen.” (*New Living Translation*)

**2. Arguments against a deity reference**

a. Some commentaries and English translations maintain that this passage is speaking of God the Father as the *theos* whom we should bless forever

1) The Revised Standard Version has placed a period between the reference to Christ and the reference to *theos* because they believe that is what Paul intended

2) They note that the few Greek manuscripts that do add punctuation marks to the text have generally separated *Christos* from the *theos* phrase that follows

b. It is also argued that Paul would not likely use this kind of deity language even if he did want to affirm the deity of Jesus

1) Paul’s monotheistic Jewish background would make it uncomfortable for him to address Jesus by the title “God”

2) He would have been more comfortable referring to Jesus as “possessing the nature of God” and “having all the fulness of deity dwell within him”

**3. Arguments for a deity reference**

a. It appears that Romans 9:5 is intended to emphasize the dual-nature of Jesus

1) “The Christ according to the flesh” refers to his humanity

2) “Who is over all, God blessed forever” refers to his deity

b. Similar to Paul’s dual-nature emphasis in Romans 1:3-4

 “. . . who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead”

c. The early church fathers (who predate the few Greek manuscripts that add punctuation marks) understood *theos* in Romans 9:5 to refer to Jesus

d. Once you grant that Paul believed in the deity of Jesus, then there is no theological reason why he could not refer to Jesus as *theos*

**Titus 2:13**

**1. The key indicator of the deity of Jesus**

a. Jesus is referred to as “our great God and Savior”

b. Who will one day appear with a heavenly glory

**2. Arguments against a deity reference**

a. Some commentaries and English translations maintain that this passage is speaking of a joint appearance by “our great God (the Father)” and “our Savior Christ Jesus”

1) The Greek phrase: *tou megalou theou kai soteros hemon Iesou Christou*

2) Literal reading: “the great God and savior our Jesus Christ”

3) They argue that the conjunction *kai*, translated as “and,” is most often used to join together two different things

b. It is also argued that Paul would not likely use this kind of deity language even if he did want to affirm the deity of Jesus

1) This is the same “Jewish monotheism” argument used for Rom. 9:5 which assumes that Paul nowhere uses *theos* for Jesus

2) This argument takes on the appearance of “circular reasoning” when Paul does this twice

**3. Arguments for a deity reference**

a. The sentence appears to have a singular subject

1) The second half (v. 14) clearly works with a singular subject (“Christ who gave Himself”)

2) This implies that the preceding subject (“our great God and Savior”) is also singular

b. The New Testament consistently uses the Greek word *epiphaneia* (appearing) for Christ (and not for God the Father)

c. The use of *kai* (and) fits well the idea of joining together two phrases that refer to the same person

1) According to the “Granville Sharp Rule:

2) When a Greek *kai* connects two singular personal nouns of the same case, if the article precedes the first noun and is not repeated before the second noun, the latter always refers to the same person that is expressed or described by the first noun

***No. 3***

**JOHANNINE STATEMENTS**

**OF DEITY**

**John 1:1-3**

**1. The deity of Christ affirmed**

a. John refers to Jesus “the Word” by the name “God” (John 1:1)

b. John affirms that Jesus experienced an intimate relationship with God the Father from the beginning (John 1:1)

1) The Greek phrase: *ho logos en pros ton theon*

2) English translation: “the Word was with God”

3) To be “with” in a relational sense

a) Indicated by the preposition *en pros* (with) being followed by a noun in the accusative form

b) More than simple location with God, but relationship with God

c. John affirms that Jesus created everything that exists

1) Jesus is attributed the divine power of creation *ex nihilo*

2) Jesus is distinguished from all created things

**2. The Jehovah’s Witnesses’ translation**

a. The Jehovah’s Witnesses translation: “And the Word was a god”

b. Implication: Jesus is a lesser deity, not on the same level as God the Father

c. Argument

1) No article in front of *theos* (god), thus should read “and the Word was a god”

2) In contrast to the preceding phrase which has an article in front of *theos*, thus should read “the Word was with God”

**3. Arguments for a deity reference**

a. Jehovah’s Witnesses do not consistently follow their proposed rule

1) In the immediate context of John 1:1, *theos* is used several times without an article in Greek (John 1:6, 12-13, 18)

2) In each of these verses the Jehovah’s Witnesses translate *theos* as “God”

b. The grammatical structure and context support the translation identifying the Word as God

1) According to the “Ernest Colwell Rule”

2) A definite predicate nominative (*theos*) should have an article when it follows the verb, but should not have an article when it precedes the verb, because the article is understood

Verb + article + DPN (No article) + DPN + verb

 *theos en ho logos*

3) See Bruce Metzger’s *Jehovah’s Witnesses and Jesus Christ*

**John 20:28**

**1. The deity of Christ affirmed**

a. Thomas addressed Jesus as “my God”

b. Jesus confirmed the idea (John 20:29)

c. The Apostle John reaffirms the deity of Christ (John 20:30-31)

**2. The Jehovah’s Witnesses’ interpretation**

a. Jehovah’s Witnesses and others have offered alternate interpretations of this passage that remove the clear testimony to the deity of Jesus

1) Thomas was referring to God the Father

2) Thomas was merely expressing surprise

b. The text, however, specifically says that Thomas was speaking to Jesus

**1 John 5:20**

**1. The deity of Christ affirmed**

a. John refers to Jesus as “the true God”

b. John refers to Jesus as (the source of) “eternal life”

**2. Arguments against a deity reference**

a. Some commentaries and English translations maintain that this passage is speaking of God the Father as “the true God and eternal life,” the one to whom the Son has pointed us

1) The verse twice refers to God the Father as the one who is “true”

2) Thus it is likely that he is the “true God” being referred to in the last phrase

b. It is also argued that none of the New Testament writers would likely use this kind of deity language even if they did want to affirm the deity of Jesus

**3. Arguments for a deity reference**

a. The antecedent for “this” in the phrase “this is the true God” would normally be the most recent noun unless context indicates otherwise

1) The preceding noun is “Jesus Christ”

2) The subject of the sentence is “the Son of God”

b. This “true God” is also “eternal life,” a concept John applies to Jesus (1 John 1:1-2; 5:11-13)

c. A strong deity affirmation for Christ is an appropriate way to end an epistle that has been critiquing a heresy that denies the incarnation and the deity of Jesus

***No. 4***

**MISCELLANEOUS STATEMENTS**

**OF DEITY**

**Hebrews 1:3**

**1. The deity of Christ affirmed**

a. Hebrews says Christ radiates the glory of God

1) The Greek phrase: *apaugasma tes doxes*

2) English translation: “the radiance of the glory (of God)”

3) The Greek word *apaugasma* refers to something that radiates a bright light

4) Jesus radiates the divine glory of God

b. Hebrews says Christ is an exact representation of God

1) The Greek phrase: *charakter tes hupostaseos autou*

2) English translation: “the exact representation of his nature”

3) The Greek word *hupostaseos* refers to the nature of a thing

4) The Greek word *charakter* refers to an exact reproduction of a thing

5) Jesus is an exact reproduction of the nature of God

**2. The significance of Jesus’ deity for his position of superiority**

a. Jesus’ identification with God’s glory and nature serves as the foundation for the “superiority” theme of the book of Hebrews

1) Jesus is God’s ultimate revelation to mankind (Heb. 1:1-2)

2) Jesus is superior to everything valued within Judaism

a) Superior to angels (Heb. 1-2)

b) Superior to Moses (Heb. 3-4)

c) Superior to the whole religious system of Judaism (Heb. 5-10)

b. This deity affirmation fits the affirmation that Christ is the Creator and Sustainer of all that exists (Heb. 1:2-3)

c. This deity affirmation fits the statement that Christ is worthy of receiving worship and service from all creatures (Heb. 1:6-7)

**2 Peter 1:1**

**1. The deity of Christ affirmed**

a. Peter refers to Jesus as “our God and Savior”

b. Peter says Jesus is the one who has given us his righteousness

**2. Arguments against a deity reference**

a. Some commentaries and English translations maintain that this passage is speaking of two persons: “our God (the Father)” and “our Savior Christ Jesus”

1) The Greek phrase: *tou theou hemon kai soteros Iesou Christou*

2) Literal reading: “the God our and Savior Jesus Christ”

3) They argue that the conjunction *kai*, translated as “and,” is most often used to join together two different things

b. The next verse indicates Peter’s intent, since all translations agree that vs. 2 refers to both God the Father and Jesus Christ

c. It is also argued that none of the New Testament writers would likely use this kind of deity language even if they did want to affirm the deity of Jesus

**3. Arguments for a deity reference**

a. The use of *kai* (and) fits well the idea of joining together two phrases that refer to the same person

1) According to the “Granville Sharp Rule:

2) When a Greek *kai* connects two singular personal nouns of the same case, if the article precedes the first noun and is not repeated before the second noun, the latter always refers to the same person that is expressed or described by the first noun

3) The same construction used in Titus 2:13 to refer to Christ as “our great God and Savior”

b. The opening phrase in 2 Peter 1:1 indicates, the subject of this verse is Jesus Christ (and not Jesus and God the Father)

c. The grammatical structure of vs. 2 is different, and clearly indicates the idea of two persons (God the Father and Jesus Christ)

**Trinitarian Passages**

**1. In the New Testament Jesus is often placed in a parallel position with God the Father and the Holy Spirit**

a. In a simple Trinitarian statement (Matt. 28:19)

b. In a Trinitarian statement within parallel phrases within a sentence (2 Cor. 1:21-22; 13:14; 1 Pet. 1:2)

c. In a Trinitarian statement within parallel sentences within a paragraph (1 Cor. 12:4-6; Eph. 4:4-6)

**2. The formula “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” (in all its different wordings) implies that the three persons belong together in the same divine category**

a. The mention of divine qualities and activities in Trinitarian passages suggests that all three persons possess the nature of God

b. The use of a variety of order in listing the three persons suggests that there is an equality in nature within the Trinity

**Early Church Testimony**

**1. The deity of Christ affirmed**

a. The early church fathers consistently speak of Jesus as being fully divine

b. They refer to him by divine titles, notably the name “God”

c. They strongly defend the deity of Christ during the later periods of Christological heresies

**2. Examples of deity affirmation**

“It was really the Ruler of all, the Creator of all, the invisible God himself, who from heaven established the truth and the holy, incomprehensible word among men, and fixed it firmly in their hearts. Nor, as one might suppose, did he do this by sending to men some subordinate—an angel, or principality, or one of those who administer earthly affairs, or perhaps one of those to whom the government of things in heaven is entrusted. Rather, he sent the Designer and Maker of the universe himself, by whom he created the heavens and confined the sea within its own bounds—him whose hidden purposes all the elements of the world faithfully carry out, him from whom the sun has received the measure of the daily rounds that it must keep, him whom the moon obeys when he commands her to shine by night, and whom the stars obey as they follow the course of the moon. He sent him by whom all things have been set in order and distinguished and placed in subjection—the heavens and the things that are in the heavens, the earth and the things in the earth, the sea and the things in the sea, fire, air, the unfathomed pit, the things in the heights and in the depths and in the realm between; God sent him to men.”

*Letter to Diognetus*, 7:2

“[They do not know that] the Father of the universe has a Son, who being the Word and First-begotten of God is also divine.”

Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 63

“For our God, Jesus the Christ, was conceived by Mary, in God’s plan being sprung both from the seed of David and from the Holy Spirit.”

Ignatius, *Ephesians*, 18:2

“Our God Jesus Christ, indeed, has revealed himself more clearly by returning to the Father.”

Ignatius, *Romans*, 3:3

“I bid you farewell as always in our God, Jesus Christ.”

Ignatius, *Letter to Polycarp*, 8:3

“. . . so that every knee may bow, of things in heaven and on earth and under the earth, to Christ Jesus our Lord and God and Savior and King, according to the pleasure of the invisible Father . . . .”

Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 1.10.1

**3. Examples of Trinitarian statements**

“For as God lives, and as the Lord Jesus Christ lives and the Holy Spirit . . . .”

Clement of Rome, *1 Clement*, 58:2

“Make a real effort, then, to stand firmly by the orders of the Lord and the apostles, so that ‘whatever you do, you may succeed’ in body and soul, in faith and love, in Son, Father, and Spirit . . . .”

Ignatius, *Magnesians*, 13:1

***No. 5***

**MESSIANIC PROPHECIES**

**OF A DIVINE KING**

**Psalm 2**

**1. The background imagery**

a. Based upon the common practice of a covenant renewal ceremony at the time of a dynastic succession

1) As an aging king neared the end of his reign, he publicly designated (anointed) the person he had chosen to be his successor (his “son”)

2) The covenant renewal ceremony required all government officials to publicly pledge allegiance to the new king (as they had done to his father) or face the new king’s wrath

b. This Psalm of David (Acts 4:25-26) may have been drawn from his own experience with his appointment of Solomon as his successor and the rebellion of Adonijah (1 Kgs. 1)

c. An outline of Psalm 2

1) The rebels’ plot to break away from their king (Psalm 2:1-3)

2) God’s response to the plans for rebellion (Psalm 2:4-6)

3) The new king’s account of his appointment (Psalm 2:7-9)

4) The Psalmist’s warning to all citizens (Psalm 2:10-12)

**2. The deity of Christ indicated**

a. The messiah-king is worthy of ruling the whole of creation (Psalm 2:8)

b. The messiah-king is worthy of being worshipped by all the kings of the earth (Psalm 2:11)

**3. The linking of this messiah-king to Jesus**

a. Psalm 2:1-2 is applied to Jesus in Acts 4:25-27

b. Psalm 2:7 is applied to Jesus in Acts 13:33 and Hebrews 1:5; 5:5

c. Psalm 2:9 is applied to Jesus in Revelation 19:15

d. “Thou art my Son” (Psalm 2:7) is a prophecy of Jesus’ ascension to heaven and his subsequent coronation (Acts 13:33; Eph. 1:18-22; Heb. 1:2)

**Psalm 45:6**

**1. The background imagery**

a. Based upon the picture of a king preparing for his wedding day (to the future queen)

b. An outline of Psalm 45

1) A description of the king (Psalm 45:1-9)

2) A description of the bride (Psalm 45:10-17)

**2. The deity of Christ indicated**

a. The king is referred to as “God” (Psalm 45:6)

b. His kingdom (“throne”) will last forever (Psalm 45:6)

**3. Arguments against a deity reference**

a. Some argue that Psalm 45:6 is a parenthetical statement addressing God the Father, praising him for setting up such a noble king

b. However, the passage is clearly messianic

1) As the thought of v. 6 continues into v. 7, it is apparent that the subject of this passage is not God the Father but someone who was appointed by “God, Thy God”

2) The Jewish rabbis recognized this text as messianic, though they had difficulty explaining the deity reference in v. 6

c. Some argue that the word “God” is being used to modify the “throne” of the king, and not to refer to the king himself

1) The Hebrew phrase: *kis aka elohim olam*

2) NASB: “Thy throne, O God, is forever”

3) Literal reading: throne your God forever

4) It is argued that *kis aka elohim* are in a construct state and should be translated as a hyphenated word: “your God-throne” (or “your divine throne”)

5) This is the reading of the Revised Standard Version: “your divine throne is forever”

d. However, the Hebrew grammar does not support the suggestion that “God” modifies “throne”

1) In a true construct phrase, no other word is supposed to come between the two words being joined together as a construct

2) In this passage “throne” is separated from “God” by the suffix “your” (*aka*)

3) The word order: throne (*kisa*) + your (*aka*) + God (*elohim*)

**4. The linking of this messiah-king to Jesus**

a. Psalm 45:6 is applied to Jesus in Hebrews 1:8-9

b. Part of the theme: The superiority of Jesus as God’s Son

**Psalm 110**

**1. The background imagery**

a. Based upon the picture of a king-priest who is given victory over all of his enemies by God

1) This imagery is unusual in that Israel did not combine the offices of king and priest

2) However, Judaism was well acquainted with the story of Melchizedek, who was both “king of Salem” and “a priest of God Most High” (Gen. 14:18)

b. An outline of Psalm 110

1) God promises to support the king’s reign (Psalm 110:1-3)

2) God promises to honor the king’s priestly intercession forever (Psalm 110:4)

3) God promises to defeat the king’s enemies (Psalm 110:5-7)

**2. The deity of Christ indicated**

a. The priest-king is addressed by David as his superior

1) David’s statement: “the Lord (God the Father) says to my Lord (the messiah, David’s Lord)”

2) This implies that the priest-king possesses a special quality that places him above the great King David in ranking

3) Though the special quality is not specified, this seems to be a subtle reference to the divine status of the priest-king

4) Jesus used Psalm 110:1 to challenge the Jewish thinking regarding the status of the messiah (Matt. 22:41-45)

b. The priest-king rules from the throne of God (Psalm 110:1)

c. The priest-king has an eternal nature (Psalm 110:4)

d. The priest-king has the authority to rule the whole earth and establish judgment (Psalm 110:6)

**3. The linking of this priest-king to Jesus**

a. Psalm 110:1 is applied to Jesus in Acts 2:32-36 and Hebrews 1:13; 10:12-13

b. Psalm 110:4 is applied to Jesus in Hebrews 5:5-6; 7:17

**The Prophets**

**1. Jeremiah 23:5-6**

a. The historical background

1) Jeremiah condemned the immoral conduct of Judah and predicted the Babylonian captivity (Jer. 21-22)

2) God promised to restore a remnant to the land of Judah after the exile (Jer. 23:3-4)

3) God promised to later raise up a descendant of David (“a righteous branch” of the family of David) to reign over the Jewish remnant (Jer. 23:5-6)

4) The use of the imagery of a branch to represent the messiah was established earlier in Isaiah 11:1-5

b. The key indicator of the deity of this “branch”

1) He is to wear the name “the LORD our righteousness”

2) God’s special name *YHWH*

**2. Micah 2:12-13**

a. The background imagery

1) God promised to restore a remnant to the land of Judah after the exile (Mic. 2:12)

2) However, even in their own land the people would still live under a bondage from which they would seek release, like sheep wanting to get out of a pen (Mic. 2:12)

3) Relief would come when God sends a “breaker” (ram) to break open the gates of the pen and lead the people out of their bondage (Mic. 2:13)

b. The key indicator of the deity of this “breaker”

1) He is to wear the name “the LORD at their head”

2) God’s special name *YHWH*

**3. Micah 5:2-5**

a. The historical background

1) Micah predicted the destruction of Israel by the Assyrians (Mic. 5:1, 5)

2) God promised to one day send a ruler to shepherd God’s people and give them peace (Mic. 5:2-5)

3) Though Micah’s audience may have understood this prophecy to refer to the rise of a military leader in their day, the Jews of the 1st century AD understood this passage to refer to the messiah (Matt. 2:4-6; John 7:41-42)

b. The key indicator of the deity of this ruler

1) He is said to have existed throughout eternity past

2) And thus possesses the divine attribute of an eternal nature

***No. 6***

**MESSIANIC PROPHECIES**

**OF GOD AMONG US**

**Isaiah 7:14**

**1. The historical background**

a. The southern kingdom of Judah was about to be attacked by the northern kingdom of Israel and by Syria (Isa. 7:1)

b. The prophet Isaiah informed King Ahaz of Judah that God would deliver his kingdom from the attackers (Isa. 7:7-9)

c. Isaiah told King Ahaz to ask God for a miraculous sign to verify the word of the prophet (Isa. 7:11)

d. God rebuked the king for refusing to ask for a sign, and then delivered his own sign: the birth of a child named Immanuel (Isa. 7:11-14)

**2. The deity of Christ indicated**

a. This child was to be something out of the ordinary

1) He would be the product of a miraculous conception (by a virgin)

2) He would be used by God as a supernatural sign to confirm his word

b. Within this context the name Immanuel (“God with us”) seems to imply that the child would literally represent the presence of God among his people (i.e., that this child would be the God who is “with us”)

**3. Arguments against a deity reference**

a. Some argue that the Hebrew word *almah* is better understood in Isaiah 7:14 to refer to a young woman and not specifically to a virgin

b. Had Isaiah intended to speak of a virgin, he would have used the more precise Hebrew term *bethulah*, which does mean virgin

c. The original intent of Isaiah was to refer to a birth within the palace of King Ahaz, not to the birth of the coming messiah

1) A successful birth within the next few days of the prophecy could serve as a “sign” for King Ahaz since he would be able to see it happen

2) But the birth of the messiah hundreds of years in the future would have little relevance to the issue of Judah’s deliverance from Israel and Syria

3) Isaiah 7:15-16 is said to support the idea that the child in question would be a contemporary of Ahaz, in that it prophesies that Israel and Syria would fall by the time the child is weaned from his mother’s milk

**4. Arguments for a deity reference**

a. Matthew 1:20-23 links Isaiah 7:14 to the miraculous conception of Jesus by the Holy Spirit

b. The Hebrew word *almah* can in fact refer to a virgin and should be so understood in Isaiah 7:14

1) The word *almah* basically refers to a young, unmarried woman, who may or may not be sexually active (depending upon the context in which the word is used)

2) Both the Greek Septuagint translation of Isaiah 7:14 and the Greek text of Matthew 1:23 translate *almah* in Isaiah 7:14 by the comparable Greek word *parthenos*

a) A popular view has been that *parthenos* always refers to a virgin

b) However, it seems more likely that *parthenos* carries the same idea as *almah* of a young, unmarried woman (whose sexual status is determined by the context)

3) The context of Matthew 1:20-25 makes it clear that Matthew understands Isaiah to be referring to a virgin conception

a) By his reference to the miraculous conception of Jesus by the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:20)

b) By his reference to Mary remaining a virgin until after the birth of Jesus (Matt. 1:25)

c. The birth of the messiah would serve as an excellent “sign” for King Ahaz

1) God was linking his immediate promise to deliver King Ahaz to his long-standing promise to send the messiah, staking the credibility of his messianic prophecies (and of Judaism itself) on whether or not he fulfilled his promise to rescue Judah from Israel and Syria

2) The messianic promise would serve as “collateral pledge” for the immediate situation

3) And the two enemy nations would be long gone by the time the messiah child was born and weaned (Isa. 7:15-16)

4) A supernatural birth is more fitting for the extraordinary size of the “sign” King Ahaz was to be given (Isa. 7:11) than a natural birth within the palace would be

5) But note: it is legitimate to suggest a double fulfillment with a palace birth and the messiah’s birth, as long Matthew’s virgin birth interpretation is not slighted

**Isaiah 9:6-7**

**1. The deity of Christ indicated**

a. This child is to be called “Mighty God”

b. This child has an eternal nature (“Eternal Father”)

1) The reference to the messiah as “Father” has no connection to the name of the first person of the Trinity

2) This is “Father” in the Jewish sense of a seniority member of the community (an “elder”) to whom neighbors can turn for assistance (Job 29:7-16; Isa. 22:20-21)

c. This child will perform supernatural activity (“Wonderful Counselor”)

1) The Hebrew word *pele* refers to the working of supernatural activity or “wonder” by one who has been empowered by God

2) The term does not necessarily indicate that a person who can do supernatural “wonders” is himself deity

3) But being empowered by God to perform miraculous “wonders” is an attestation from God that the messiah is all that he claims to be (Acts 2:22)

**2. The Jehovah’s Witnesses’ interpretation**

a. Jehovah’s Witnesses argue that the messiah child is being called a “mighty god” in contrast to the one Almighty God

b. However, the phrase “mighty God” obviously does not imply some kind of lesser deity, since it is also used in Isaiah 10:20-21 for Jehovah

**The Angel of the Lord**

**1. The Angel of the Lord**

a. Several references in early Old Testament writings

1) When Hagar fled to the wilderness during her pregnancy (Gen. 16:7-14)

2) When Abraham prepared to sacrifice Isaac (Gen. 22:11-19)

3) When Jacob had a vision regarding the speckled flock (Gen. 31:11-13)

4) When Jacob wrestled all night (Gen. 32:24-30; Hos. 12:3-5)

5) When Jacob blessed the sons of Joseph (Gen. 48:15-16)

6) When Moses saw the burning bush (Exod. 3:2-4:5; Acts 7:30-38)

7) When the Egyptians were separated from the Israelites on the banks of the Red Sea (Exod. 14:19)

8) When it was time for the Israelites to move forward in the wilderness (Exod. 23:20-23)

9) When Balaam was called by King Balak (Num. 22:21-38)

10) When Israel renewed its covenant with God prior to Joshua’s death (Judg. 2:1-5)

11) When Gideon was called into service (Judg. 6:11-24)

12) When the birth of Samson was announced to his parents (Judg. 13:2-23)

b. The Biblical descriptions of the Angel of the Lord are so exalted that he must be either a very high ranking angel or a divine theophany

**2. The Angel of the Lord as a theophany**

a. The name “angel of the Lord” indicates a messenger of God

1) The basic idea of *malak* is messenger or spokesman

2) The Old Testament use of the word

a) Used 214 times

b) Used 50% of the time for human messengers of God (kings, military leaders, prophets)

c) Used 33% for the “Angel of the Lord”

d) Used 17% for heavenly angels

b. The Hebrew grammar indicates a very special messenger

1) Some argue that the Hebrew phrase should be translated as “an angel of the Lord” and be understood to refer to one of God’s many angels because there is no article in front of “angel” in the Hebrew text

2) However, the grammatical structure of the Hebrew phrase indicates that the article is understood to be present

3) The Hebrew phrase: *malak Yahweh*

4) The two words are linked together in a special kind of construct state

a) The rule: When the second noun in a construct state is definite, then the first noun is understood to be definite also and should be translated with an article (J. Weingreen, *A Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew*, p. 46.)

b) Since *Yahweh* is obviously a definite (proper) noun, any noun preceding it in a construct state should have a definite article understood

5) The proper translation of the construct phrase *malak Yahweh* is “the angel of the Lord”

c. Key indicators of the deity of the Angel of the Lord

1) The Angel of the Lord is referred to as “God” by some who saw him (Gen. 32:30; Judg. 13:21-22)

2) The Angel of the Lord is referred to as “God” by the Biblical text (Exod. 3:2 and 4; Exod. 13:21 and 14:19; Judg. 6:12 and 14)

3) The Angel of the Lord speaks of the work of God in a 1st person manner that makes it sound like he is the one who is deciding and acting (Gen. 16:10; 22:11-12; 31:11-13; Exod. 3:6, 16; 4:5; Judg. 2:1)

4) The Angel of the Lord claimed to have the name of God within himself (Exod. 23:20-22)

5) The Angel of the Lord accepted a sacrificial offering to himself (Judg. 6:18-21)

6) The blessing of the Angel of the Lord is used by Jacob in parallel with the blessing of God (Gen. 48:15-16)

**3. The Angel of the Lord and the Son of God**

a. The Angel of the Lord cannot be a theophany appearance by God the Father

1) The Angel of the Lord is said to have been sent by God (Gen. 22:15-18; Exod. 23:20-23; Num. 22:22, 31; Judg. 13:8-9)

2) Gideon spoke to the Angel of the Lord about God and then spoke to God about his having seen the Angel of the Lord (Judg. 6:12-13, 22-23)

b. Of the remaining deity options, the Son of God is the most likely identification of “the Angel of the Lord”

1) There is a “precedent” for the Son of God to make a visible appearance on earth in the Incarnation, but no such example for the Holy Spirit

2) When it is understood that *malak Yahweh* literally means “the messenger of God,” then it looks quite similar to Jesus’ New Testament title “the Word of God” (John 1:1; Rev. 19:13)

3) The early church fathers typically assumed that the Angel of the Lord was a theophany appearance by the Son of God

 “Now the Word of God is his Son, as I said before. He is also called ‘Angel’ and ‘Apostle,’ for [as Angel] he announces what it is necessary to know, and [as Apostle] is sent forth to testify to what is announced . . . . So the Jews, [continue] to think that the Father of the universe had spoken to Moses [in the burning bush], when it was the Son of God, who is called both Angel and Apostle, who spoke to him . . . .” (Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 63)

**The Captain of the Lord’s Host**

**1. The historical background**

a. Joshua encountered a heavenly being who identified himself as the Captain of the Lord’s Host (Josh. 5:13-6:2)

1) Joshua was preparing to lead Israel in the attack against Jericho (Josh. 5:13)

2) The Captain of the Lord’s Host appeared and promised victory to Joshua (Josh. 6:2)

b. The Biblical description of the Captain of the Lord’s Host is so exalted that he must be either a very high ranking angel or a divine theophany

**2. The Captain of the Lord’s Host as a theophany**

a. The Captain of the Lord’s Host declared that the ground in his presence was holy ground (Josh. 5:15)

b. When he spoke to Joshua it is said that “the LORD” was speaking to Joshua, using God’s special name *YHWH*

**3. The Captain of the Lord’s Host and the Son of God**

a. The Captain of the Lord’s Host cannot be a theophany appearance by God the Father, since he represents God as the leader of his heavenly army

b. Of the remaining deity options, the Son of God is the most likely identification of ‘the Captain of the Lord’s Host”

1) There is a “precedent” for the Son of God to make a visible appearance on earth in the Incarnation, but no such example for the Holy Spirit

2) The authority role of the Captain of the Lord’s Host over the heavenly army is appropriate for the Son of God, who in the New Testament is declared to be the Lord and King of all creation, including the heavenly host (Eph. 1:20-22)

3) The similarity between the “holy ground” statement of the Captain of the Lord’s Host (Josh. 5:15) and the “holy ground” statement of the Angel of the Lord (Exod. 3:5) suggests a parallel identification

**YHWH Passages**

**1. *Yahweh* as a special name for God**

a. The Jews originally wrote the name of God with 4 consonants and no vowels: *YHWH*

b. Rather than pronounce this word and risk “using the Lord’s name in vain”, they spoke the Hebrew word for “my Lord” (*adonai)* every time they saw *YHWH*

c. Centuries later when the Jews wanted to pronounce the name of God, they did not know the proper vowels for *YHWH*

d. Thus they used the vowels from *adonai* and created the word *Yahweh*, later carried over into English as “Jehovah”

e. English translations typically translate *YHWH* as “Jehovah” or “LORD” with all capital letters

**2. New Testament use of *Yahweh* passages**

a. Some Old Testament references to *YHWH* are borrowed by the New Testament writers and applied to Jesus

b. Rom. 10:9-13 applies Joel 2:32 to Jesus, even though it is a description of *YHWH* (see Joel 2:27, 31-32)

c. Eph. 4:7-8 applies Psalm 68:18 to Jesus, even though it is a description of *YHWH* see Psalm 4:17-18)

d. Phil. 2:9-11 applies Isaiah 45: 23-24 to Jesus, even though it is a description of *YHWH*

e. Heb. 1:10-12 applies Psalm 102 to Jesus, even though it is a description of *YHWH* (see Psalm 102:1, 12, 24)

f. Rev. 17:14 and 19:16 apply Deut. 10:17 to Jesus, even though it is a description of *YHWH*

**3. The coming of *Yahweh***

a. Some Old Testament references to the forerunner of *YHWH* are interpreted by the New Testament writers as applying to John the Baptist preceding Jesus

b. Matt. 3:1-3 and John 1:19-23 interpret Isaiah 40:3-5 as applying to John the Baptist and Jesus, implying that Jesus is the *YHWH* who would come after the “Voice in the wilderness” who prepares a royal road for *YHWH*

c. Matt. 11:7-10 and Mark 1:2-4 interpret Malachi 3:1 as applying to John the Baptist and Jesus, implying that Jesus is the *YHWH* who would come after the “Messenger of *YHWH*”

***No. 7***

**THE HUMAN NATURE**

**OF CHRIST**

**Full Humanity**

**1. God’s scheme of redemption required that the Son of God take on all aspects of human nature**

a. To be our savior he had to possess the same nature as those he sought to save (Heb. 2:14)

b. To be our savior he had to become like us “in all things” (Heb. 2:17)

**2. It is an “antichrist heresy” to deny that the Son of God was anything less than fully human**

a. The Son of God took on a fleshly body (1 John 4:2-3; 2 John 7), as well as all the inner nature that goes with it (Heb. 2:17)

b. It is a heretical idea to separate the human Jesus from the divine Son of God as if they were two separate persons

1) The Christological heresy being refuted in 1 & 2 John

a) A denial that the Son of God (whom the Gnostics called the “Christ”) had taken on real humanity

b) A distinction between “the Son of God” (the “Christ”) and Jesus, the human host

2) The philosophical basis for this heresy

a) The dualistic concept that matter is inherently evil

b) Thus, deity could not be intimately associated with human flesh without being contaminated

**3. Jesus’ outward appearance during the Incarnation supported his claim to be truly human**

a. Jesus looked like an ordinary human being (Phil. 2:7; 1 John 1:1-3)

b. His physical appearance would not have suggested that he was anything more than human (Isa. 53:2)

**Typical Physical Experiences**

**1. Physical birth**

a. For the most part, the birth of Jesus was similar to that of all human beings

1) The Bible does not indicate that there was anything exceptional (or supernatural) regarding the way the baby developed in the womb or the way the baby was delivered

2) And none of the unusual circumstances surrounding the birth of Jesus contradict the idea that Jesus experienced a true physical birth

3) In fact, similar things happened at the birth of other Biblical characters (such as Samuel, Samson, and John the Baptist)

b. The one supernatural aspect of the birth process for Jesus was the miraculous conception

1) The Holy Spirit miraculously fertilized one of Mary’s reproductive eggs without the use of male sperm (Matt. 1:18-23; Luke 1:34-35)

2) Though this action has significant implications for theology, it is only one part of the full birth process, and thus does not contradict the idea that Jesus experienced a true physical birth

**2. Hunger and thirst**

a. The Gospels note occasions when Jesus was hungry or thirsty (Matt. 4:2; 21:18; John 19:28)

b. Apparently Jesus’ body required nourishment and drink in a typical human fashion, thus requiring him to take into account the need to seek out food and drink as he pursued his ministry

**3. Fatigue and sleep**

a. The Gospels note occasions when Jesus was tired or sleeping (Matt. 8:24; John 4:6)

b. Apparently Jesus’ body required rest in a typical human fashion, thus requiring him to sometimes rest from his ministry and the crowds (Mark 7:24)

**4. Physical death**

a. For the most part, the death of Jesus was similar to that of all human beings

1) When he stopped breathing, his spirit was separated from his body (Matt. 27:50; Luke 23:46; John 19:30)

2) Following his death, his spirit was taken to “paradise” (Luke 23:43)

3) And none of the unusual circumstances surrounding the death of Jesus contradict the idea that Jesus experienced a true physical death

a) The sun was darkened for 3 hours (Matt. 27:45)

b) A great earthquake (Matt. 27:51, 54)

c) The temple veil was torn from top to bottom by unseen hands (Matt. 27:51)

b. The supernatural aspect of the death of Jesus was the fact that it occurred to a divine being

1) This gives the death of Jesus a unique status in all of human history

2) Though this idea has significant implications for theology, it does not reflect upon the actual nature of Jesus’ death, and thus does not contradict the idea that Jesus experienced a true physical death

**5. Other possible experiences for Jesus**

a. Since Jesus was like us “in all things” (Heb. 2:17), it is reasonable to picture Jesus experiencing things common to mankind that are not specifically associated with Jesus in the Bible

b. Physical recreation

1) Since exercise and recreation contribute to the health of the human body and mind, it is reasonable to assume that Jesus participated in such activities

2) In a similar vein, it is reasonable to assume that Jesus enjoyed a good sense of humor (as the Gospels sometimes suggest)

3) In all such activities we would expect Jesus to always act in a responsible fashion and without sin (Heb. 4:15)

c. Sickness

1) It is very common to assume that Jesus was exempt from sickness

“He [Christ] does not seem to have suffered from illness. There was a certain physical robustness about Him which made it possible for Him to take long journeys on foot and to spend long nights in prayer. . . . But are sickness and weakness necessary to human existence in its genuine humanness? It is not obvious that they are. Like sin, they mark us all as being less than human; as being fallen humans.”

H. D. McDonald, *Jesus—Human and Divine* (1968), p. 14

2) However, it is not unreasonable to assume that Jesus may have experienced some sickness

a) Ever since the Fall in Genesis 3, sickness has been as much a part of human experience as death (which we know Jesus experienced)

b) Being sick would not necessarily detract from the Biblical picture of Jesus or imply that he was a sinner (John 9:1-3)

**Friendship Love**

**1. Human beings typically develop feelings of love and friendship with a few special people they enjoy being with**

**2. Though Jesus practiced love toward everyone, in typical human fashion he also developed his own close friendships**

a. Mary, Martha, and Lazarus (John 11:3, 5, 36)

b. The apostles (John 15:13-15)

c. The apostle John (John 13:23; 19:26; 21:7, 20)

d. These relationships are often described with the Greek word *phileo*, which generally refers to an emotional attraction and affection felt among friends

**3. Jesus was also capable of a spontaneous affection for a new acquaintance when he saw something about the other person that he “liked” (Mark 10:21)**

**Pleasure and Joy**

**1. Human beings typically manifest a spontaneous pleasure and joy in response to people and situations in life**

a. Through a spontaneous reaction of joy when something happens that pleases us emotionally

b. Through smiles and exclamations

c. Through a sense of humor regarding life

**2. In typical human fashion Jesus exhibited a spirit of spontaneous pleasure and joy**

a. Reacting with joy at someone else’s good news (Luke 10:17, 21)

b. Teaching with a sense of humor (Matt. 7:3; 19:24; 23:24; John 1:47)

**Anger**

**1. Human beings typically respond to things they do not like with a certain amount of feelings of irritation and anger**

a. These feelings of anger are natural emotions that are not inappropriate when they are handled correctly

1) When you express your anger in ways that are appropriate for the situation and free from sin (Eph. 4:26-27)

2) When you hold off your expression of anger long enough to determine what is the best action to take (Prov. 15:18; 16:32; 19:11; Jas. 1:19)

b. This concept of anger is similar to God’s pattern of anger and wrath toward sin (Rom. 1:18-20)

**2. In typical human fashion Jesus often exhibited feelings of frustration and anger with people around him**

a. Jesus was angry with the merchants who desecrated God’s temple (Matt. 21:12-13; John 2:14-17)

b. Jesus was angry with the stubborn disbelief of the Pharisees (Mark 3:5; 8:12)

c. Jesus was angry with the presumption of his disciples when they prohibited children to approach him (Mark 10:14)

d. Jesus was angry with demons as he cast them out of people (Mark 9:25; Luke 4:39, 41)

e. Jesus was frustrated and angry with people who would not keep quiet when he told them to do so

1) Jesus sometimes expressed feelings of anger in the stern voice that he used to warn people he healed not to publicize what he had done

2) Sometimes the Greek word *embrimaomai* is used to describe Jesus as he “threatened” and warned people (Matt. 9:30)

3) Sometimes the Greek word *epitimao* is used to describe Jesus as he “threatened” and warned people (Matt. 12:16; Mark 3:12)

4) Both terms carry the idea of speaking sternly, with a sense of irritation (as in scolding), as illustrated by the use of *embrimaomai* in Mark 14:5

5) The frustration Jesus regularly felt with the people he healed could be expressed in a “deep sigh” even before he healed and then warned them to be quiet (Mark 7:34-36)

f. Jesus was angry when he faced the death of his friend Lazarus (John 11:33, 38)

**Sorrow and Tears**

**1. Human beings typically respond to things that disappoint and hurt them with feelings of sorrow and with the shedding of tears**

**2. In typical human fashion Jesus often experienced sadness and tears**

a. When he heard about the death of his cousin and friend John the Baptist (Matt. 14:13)

b. When he approached the tomb of Lazarus (John 11:35)

c. When he reflected upon the coming destruction of Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-44)

1) The Greek word *klaio* (“wept”) suggests tears

2) And also a loud wailing sound, typical of Middle Eastern men

d. When he prayed in Gethsemane regarding his imminent death (Matt. 26:37-38; Heb. 5:7)

e. As the prophet Isaiah foretold, Jesus was a man who experienced much sorrow (Isa. 53:3)

**Anxiety and Uneasiness**

**1. Humans beings typically respond to difficult situations with a certain amount of feelings of apprehension, anxiety, and uneasiness**

a. The key Greek term for this emotion: *tarasso*

1) The word generally refers to being agitated, troubled, and distressed (i.e., inner feelings of commotion and uneasiness)

2) The word *tarasso* is typically used in the Gospels to refer to people being afraid of something (as in Matt. 14:26; Luke 1:12-13)

3) English translations often translate *tarasso* with the words “fear,” “afraid,” and “anxiety” when referring to people other than Jesus

4) But there has been a hesitancy among Bible translators to use the English words “fear,” “afraid,” and “anxiety” when *tarasso* is used to refer to Jesus

b. These feelings of anxiety are natural emotions that are not inappropriate when they are handled correctly

1) When you express your anxiety in ways that are appropriate for the situation and free from sin

2) When you deal honestly with your anxiety in prayer before God

3) When you do not allow your anxiety to keep you from carrying on your responsibilities in life

**2. In typical human fashion Jesus sometimes experienced feelings of anxiety**

a. When Jesus was “troubled” as he approached the tomb of Lazarus (John 11:33), the Greek text uses the term *tarasso*

b. When Jesus was “troubled” as he discussed his imminent death during his final week (John 12:27; 13:21), the Greek text uses the term *tarasso*

c. When Jesus was “distressed” as he prayed in Gethsemane regarding his imminent death (Matt. 26:37), the Greek text uses the term *tarasso*

**3. Jesus’ feelings of anxiety were apparently triggered by thoughts of the horrible suffering that awaited him at Calvary**

a. Jesus’ anxiety would not have been a fear of the unknown, but a dread of that which he knew all too well (and which any rational person should fear)

b. Jesus always expressed his feelings of anxiety in an appropriate manner without sin

1) He honestly presented his feelings to God in prayer

2) Then moved forward to complete the task that produced so much anxiety within him

**4. The full humanity of Jesus is clearly demonstrated in the full range of human emotions he exhibits in the Gospels**

a. Since Jesus was like us “in all things” (Heb. 2:17), it is reasonable to picture Jesus experiencing any human emotion common to mankind even if it is not specifically associated with Jesus in the Bible

b. It also enhances our mental image of Jesus’ ministry on earth when we picture him operating with a full range of human emotions as he works among people

“What John does for us in this particular statement [John 11:33, 38] is to uncover to us the heart of Jesus, as he wins for us our salvation. Not in cold unconcern, but in flaming wrath against the foe, Jesus smites in our behalf. He has not only saved us from the evils which oppress us; he has felt for and with us in our oppression, and under the impulse of these feelings has wrought our redemption.”

“He who loves men must needs hate with a burning hatred all that does wrong to human beings, and . . . Jesus never wavered in his consistent resentment of the special wrong-doing which he was called upon to witness.”

B. B. Warfield, “The Emotional Life of Our Lord,” *The Person and Work of Christ* (1912), pp. 117, 122

c. Reflecting upon the emotional life of Jesus can be an encouragement to our prayer life, as we realize that his intimate experience with humanity truly allows him to understand and sympathize with our emotional feelings when we express in prayer both our good feelings and our bad feelings (Heb. 4:15-16)

“Not only do we read that he wept and wailed, sighed and groaned; but we read also of his angry glare, his annoyed speech, his chiding words, the outbreaking ebullition of his rage; of the agitation of his bearing when under strong feeling, the open exultation of his joy, the unrest of his movements in the faces of anticipated evils, the loud cry which was wrung from him in his moment of desolation. Nothing is lacking to make the impression strong that we have before us in Jesus a human being like ourselves.”

B. B. Warfield, “The Emotional Life of Our Lord,” *The Person and Work of Christ* (1912), p. 138

***No. 8***

**THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT**

**OF CHRIST**

**Physical Growth**

**1. In typical human fashion Jesus’ physical body grew from baby form to adult stature**

a. His physical development from birth to age 12 is simply noted without comment in Luke 2:40

b. His physical development from age 12 to adulthood (age 30) is simply noted without comment in Luke 2:52

**2. There is no indication in the Bible that Jesus’ physical body possessed any unique characteristics**

a. No indication that he was exempt from the normal development process

b. No indication that he had any physical advantages over his peers

c. No indication that he had any physical characteristics that made him distinctively noticeable to other people (Isa. 53:2)

**3. There is no indication in the Bible that Jesus used supernatural powers in the 30 years prior to his years of ministry**

a. John 2:11 identifies the changing of water to wine at the wedding feast in Cana as Jesus’ first “sign” or miraculous act

b. This statement undermines the credibility of the accounts of miraculous activity in Jesus’ infancy and youth that are mentioned in various apocryphal Gospels

**Mental Development**

**1. In typical human fashion Jesus increased in knowledge from infancy to adulthood**

a. His intellectual development from birth to age 12 is simply noted without comment in Luke 2:40

b. His intellectual development from age 12 to adulthood (age 30) is simply noted without comment in Luke 2:52

**2. There is no indication in the Bible that Jesus’ mental capacities possessed any unique characteristics**

a. No indication that he was exempt from the normal learning process

b. No indication that he had any advantages over his peers

c. The most we can say with certainty regarding Jesus’ intellect and mental capacities is that they were sufficient for his role as messiah

**3. There is no indication in the Bible that Jesus used knowledge acquired supernaturally in the 30 years prior to his years of ministry**

a. It is possible that Jesus’ questions and answers in the temple at age 12 (Luke 2:46-47) were derived from supernatural means, but that is not a necessary conclusion

1) The passage does not actually indicate the involvement of any supernatural activity

2) It is not uncommon for a child to “amaze” adults because he has developed his learning and skills in a particular area to a level not typically associated with his age

3) It may be that Jesus’ performance in the temple at age 12 should be credited to the instruction of his parents and his own disciplined study of the Old Testament

a) Because of the information revealed to them at the nativity, Mary and Joseph may have given more attention to Bible training for their special son than was usually the case

b) Jesus may have impressed the leaders of the temple by being more advanced in his study of the Scriptures than the average 12 year old

b. The first definite use of supernatural knowledge by Jesus recorded in the Gospels was when he knew that Nathanael had been sitting under a fig tree even though Nathanael had been out of his sight (John 1:48)

**Social Development**

**1. In typical human fashion Jesus developed social skills for relating with other people as he matured in years**

a. His social development from age 12 to adulthood (age 30) is simply noted without comment in Luke 2:52

b. Like any human being, Jesus would have had to have been taught the appropriate social skills for his culture

1) The parental rules for his home

2) The proper way to play with other children

3) The proper conduct in a classroom

4) The rules of common courtesy and manners

5) The rules and regulations of the law

**2. There is no indication in the Bible that Jesus’ social development progressed in any way other than a typical fashion**

**Spiritual Growth**

**1. In typical human fashion Jesus grew in his understanding and practice of the Jewish faith**

a. His spiritual development from age 12 to adulthood (age 30) is simply noted without comment in Luke 2:52

b. Like any Jewish child, Jesus would have had to have been taught the religious beliefs and practices of Judaism

1) A knowledge of God

2) The mechanics of prayer and devotion

3) The mechanics of worship rituals

4) The words and tunes of songs of praise

5) A knowledge of the Old Testament

**2. There is no indication in the Bible that Jesus’ religious development progressed in any way other than a typical fashion**

a. Jesus’ religious development probably proceeded at a faster pace than that of his peers because of his unique calling (as implied in Luke 2:46-47), but that would not necessarily imply that the learning process was any different from a normal child

b. All of Luke’s descriptions of Jesus’ growth have parallel to other Biblical figures such as Samuel (1 Sam. 2:26) and John the Baptist (Luke 1:80)

**3. Some cautions are in order when reflecting upon the possibilities in Jesus’ human experience**

a. Never attribute to Jesus any experience that involves sin (Heb. 4:15)

b. Always take into consideration that Jesus’ human experiences were contingent upon his particular life circumstances

1) The realistic possibilities will be limited by Jesus’ actual circumstances

2) It is not necessarily inappropriate to picture how Jesus might have acted had he lived under different circumstances

a) For example, it can be edifying to picture what Jesus would do with the situations we face today (as is dramatized in the popular book *In His Steps*)

b) However, when using such creative fancy, only associate Jesus with things that are consistent with his moral standards

c) And keep in mind that Jesus’ sense of a special calling by God would limit what choices he could actually make

d) Even so, it can be helpful to consider how Jesus would handle such situations, even though we know they were not serious options for him

c. Always try to maintain a respectful picture of Jesus as you reflect upon his humanity

1) Those human experiences that do not belong in decent conversation are better not discussed (even though they may have been part of Jesus’ life)

2) Those human experiences that we prefer not to think about in relation to people we respect are better not discussed (even though they may have been part of Jesus’ life)

***No. 9***

**JESUS’ SPIRITUAL ACTIVITY**

**Fervent Prayer**

**1. Jesus viewed prayer as something essential for his life and ministry**

a. He often spent time alone in prayer in desert areas (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16) and in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:39)

b. He sometimes prayed for hours at a time (Matt. 14:23; Luke 6:12)

c. He prayed before important activities in his ministry

1) During his baptism (Luke 3:21)

2) Before selecting his apostles (Luke 6:12-13)

3) Before working miracles (Mark 7:34; John 6:11; 11:41-42)

4) Before he went to Calvary (Matt. 26:39-44; John 17:1-5)

**2. The prayer life of Jesus is a strong testimony to the idea that Jesus was fully human**

**3. The recorded prayers of Jesus**

a. His model prayer (Matt. 6:9-13)

b. His prayer for the mission of his seventy disciples (Luke 10:21-22)

c. His prayer lamenting the resistance of the Jews (Matt. 11:25-26)

d. His prayer before raising Lazarus (John 11:41-42)

e. His prayer at the end of his last public discourse (John 12:28)

f. His prayer at the end of the last supper (John 17:1-26)

g. His final prayer in Gethsemane (Matt. 26:39, 42)

h. His brief prayers on the cross (Matt. 27:46; Luke 23:34, 46)

**A Sinless Life**

**1. The New Testament affirms that Jesus lived his whole life without committing any sin**

a. He “knew no sin” (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:21-22; 1 John 3:5)

b. He never yielded to the temptation to sin (Heb. 4:15)

c. He was “holy, innocent, undefiled, and separated from sinners” (Heb. 7:26)

**2. The idea of Jesus’ sinlessness does not require that he performed all of his earthly activities with perfection, but only that he never sinned**

a. In those activities of life in which an error carries no moral value (i.e., no sin) we can assume that Jesus had experiences similar to the rest of mankind

b. As he grew and developed Jesus would not need to be perfect in everything he did (especially on his first attempt), as long as there was no moral choice involved

c. Likewise in his childhood conduct Jesus would not need to be perfect at all times

1) Both Judaism and Christianity have traditionally assumed that children live in a state of spiritual innocence before God (Matt. 18:2-4; 19:14) and that their misdeeds are not to be considered as sins

2) Because sin should not be credited to a person until that person is mature enough to understand the concepts of sin and righteousness and is able to make responsible choices within this context

3) Thus if it is true that the conduct of young children does not carry a moral value with God, then it is not necessary to assume that the young child Jesus had perfect conduct at all times

**3. The Biblical claim that Jesus was sinless is supported by the fact that no real example of sin by Jesus has ever been documented**

a. Jesus’ association with sinners did not involve sin

1) The Pharisees often criticized Jesus for spending time with notorious sinners (Matt. 9:11; Luke 19:7)

2) However, Jesus clearly explained that he associated with sinners in order to lead them to repentance (Matt. 9:12; Luke 19:10)

3) There is no indication in the Gospels that Jesus ever behaved like the sinners to whom he ministered

b. Jesus’ disregard for the Sabbath regulations of the Pharisees was not a sin

1) The Pharisees often criticized Jesus for not observing their Sabbath regulations (John 9:16, 24)

2) But Jesus honored the Sabbath principle as designed by God

a) He explained that God’s Sabbath rules were never intended to be as restrictive as the Pharisees had made them with their many traditions (Mark 2:25-27)

b) He explained that the Sabbath principle was never intended to prevent someone from helping a friend in serious need (Luke 13:14-16; 14:3-5)

c) And he noted that his position as God’s Son gave him the authority to determine what conduct was appropriate for a Sabbath day (Mark 2:28)

3) It was only the man-made traditions regarding the Sabbath that Jesus did not feel obligated to follow

c. Neither the Jewish courts nor the Roman courts could validate a charge against Jesus

1) The charge that Jesus had threatened to destroy the temple (Matt. 26:61) had no substance

a) Jesus did not say that **he** would destroy the temple (John 2:19)

b) The temple he was referring to was actually his own body (John 2:21)

c) This charge was only tested in the early portion of the Jewish trials

2) The charge that Jesus had tried to incite the Jews in a rebellion against Rome (Luke 23:2) had no substance

a) Jesus did not say that Jews should not pay taxes to Rome (Luke 20:25)

b) Jesus’ claim to be a king was clearly understood by Pilate to be a religious concept (Luke 23:2-4, 14-15; John 18:33-38)

c) When Pilate finally condemned Jesus to death on the charge of treason (John 19:19), it was only because the Jewish leaders threatened to get him trouble with Rome and have him removed from his position (Matt. 27:24; John 19:12-13)

3) The charge that Jesus had committed blasphemy had no substance

a) Blasphemy was the charge used to officially condemn Jesus to death in the Jewish trials (Matt. 26:65-66; 27:1)

b) Blasphemy was the charge reluctantly admitted to Pilate (John 19:7)

c) But it is not blasphemy to claim to be the Son of God if in fact you are the Son of God, as is the case with Jesus

**Resistance to Temptations**

**1. In typical human fashion, Jesus faced a variety of temptations throughout his life on earth**

a. The only recorded temptation of Jesus is the episode in the wilderness following his baptism (Matt. 4:1-11)

b. However, this was only the beginning of many temptations throughout his ministry (Luke 4:13)

c. Jesus was tempted “in all things as we are” (Heb. 4:15)

1) The idea is not that Jesus faced every possible temptation, but that he faced temptation in every aspect of his life

2) Jesus’ divine nature and special mission would not exempt him from temptation, but rather, would likely attract some of the craftiest temptations ever devised by Satan

“A silly idea is current that good people do not know what temptation means. This is an obvious lie. Only those who try to resist temptation know how strong it is. After all, you find out the strength of the German army by fighting against it, not by giving in. You find out the strength of a wind by trying to walk against it, not by lying down. A man who gives in to temptation after five minutes simply does not know what it would have been like an hour later. That is why bad people, in one sense, know very little about badness. They have lived a life sheltered by always giving in. We never find out the strength of the evil impulse inside us until we try to fight it: and Christ, because He was the only man who never yielded to temptation, is also the only man who knows to the full what temptation means.”

C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (1952), pp. 124-25

**2. It may be that Jesus’ resistance to temptation was by divine necessity**

a. Some argue that Jesus’ divine nature would not allow him to sin

b. The premise for the argument is that deity is by nature *non potuit peccare* (not able to sin)

“Christ’s inability to commit sin was, strictly speaking, not a limitation, but a perfection; for certainly there is no surer proof of imperfection than that when confronted with a choice between good and evil the person is capable of choosing evil. Consequently, one of the rewards that we look forward to in heaven is that of being confirmed in holiness so that we too shall be unable to commit sin.”

Loraine Boettner, *Studies in Theology* (1947), p. 212

c. While the temptations Jesus faced were genuine temptations, they were simply not as powerful as the supernatural power they were up against

“Temptation is literally a testing, to see whether the tested one will choose God’s service or not. This does not necessarily imply the possibility of a failure to stand the test. Gold may be tested as well as dross. And gold can never fail to stand the test. . . . Being pure gold, He [Christ] could not fail to stand the test. He might be tempted by Satan in many ways; but it was not possible that He should fall, because He was the Son of God.”

Joseph Strump, *The Christian Faith*, p. 148

**3. But it may be that Jesus could have yielded to temptation and simply chose not to do so**

a. The argument of divine necessity is reasonable but not necessary

1) Jesus was capable of doing several things that are foreign to the nature of deity (including suffering and dying)

2) And we do not know for certain whether God himself is holy out of necessity or by moral choice (as with the creatures he has made in his image)

b. The idea that Jesus was not capable of yielding to temptation would be a radical break from the human norm he assumed in the Incarnation

1) This would give Jesus a significant advantage over humanity in dealing with temptation

2) It would restrict the statement that he was “made like us **in all things**” (Heb. 2:17)

3) It would qualify the statement that he was “tempted in all things **like us** and yet **without sin**” (Heb. 4:15)

c. The fact that Satan tried to tempt Jesus implies that this “master of the art” thought it was possible for Jesus to sin

d. The most natural reading of the Biblical references to Jesus’ temptations is that he was dealing with temptations on terms similar to other men, just as has been the case with all other aspects of his human experience

“As man He was tempted; and as man He triumphed. There was no play-acting here. This was no sham fight. He felt the stress of the struggle of resistance. There was no escape for Him from the temptations which assail mankind. . . .

He who had shown Himself to fulfill all righteousness now shows Himself to resist all temptations. And it must be well marked that He had no secret weapon. He did not call on special means to overcome the devil other than those at the disposal of us all. By the Spirit He used the Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. That was all He used; and that was enough.”

H. D. McDonald, *Jesus—Human and Divine*, pp. 32-33

**4. The easiest way to account for Jesus’ perfect record of sinlessness is by some form of divine necessity**

a. Either his divine nature would not permit him to choose sin

b. Or God the Father used his supernatural power to prevent him from choosing sin

**5. The more difficult (and more intriguing) explanation is that Jesus’ sinlessness derived from his strong commitment to his divine calling**

a. His commitment to the idea that he was the messiah and the Son of God (evident at least as early as age 12) should have been a powerful motivating force

b. But if we believe that **every** act of sin is the result of a choice, then we must allow that Jesus may have been just the right person to handle that challenge the way God intended mankind to do from the very beginning with Adam and Eve

***No. 10***

**JESUS’ MESSIANIC ROLE**

**Divine Appointment in Baptism**

**1. Jesus’ baptism was the occasion for Jesus to officially declare his acceptance of the role of messiah**

a. It is apparent that the baptism marks the beginning of his messiah ministry, since there is no indication of ministry prior to the baptism

b. Jesus said that he wanted to be baptized in order to “fulfill all righteousness” (Matt. 3:15)

. Thus it may be that this baptism was something God expected Jesus to do because this was the manner in which Jesus was to indicate if he was ready to begin his duties

1) The baptism of John the Baptist was designed to symbolize two things

a) That a person had repented of his sins

b) And was prepared to answer the call of the Kingdom of God and take his place

2) John realized that Jesus did not need a baptism that declared repentance from sins (Matt. 3:14)

3) But Jesus understood that he did need to answer the call of the Kingdom of God and accept his appointed role in that plan (Psa. 40:6-8; Heb. 10:5-9)

**2. Jesus’ baptism was the occasion for God to announce to Jesus that he would use him as the messiah**

a. God declared that he was “pleased” with what he had seen in the life of Jesus (Matt. 3:17)

b. By naming Jesus his “Son” and his “chosen one,” God officially appointed Jesus to the role of messiah

**3. Jesus’ baptism was the occasion for Jesus to be anointed by the Holy Spirit and be equipped for the work of the messiah**

a. The Holy Spirit was placed upon Jesus in response to his submission to the will of God in his baptism (Matt. 3:16)

b. Jesus later explained that his anointing and empowering by the Holy Spirit had been a fulfillment of messianic prophecy (Matt. 12:18-21; Luke 4:18-19)

**4. Jesus’ appointment to the role of messiah is consistent with the idea that he was fully human like us**

a. Other men in Biblical times also received special service appointments by God, often in the midst of supernatural activity

1) Moses received his appointment to lead the nation of Israel while speaking to God in a burning bush (Exod. 3)

2) Paul received his appointment to be an apostle to the Gentiles through a vision of Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9)

b. We, too, have a calling from God to Christian service and ministry

1) Spoken through the written Word

2) And indicated by the spiritual gifts we have been given

c. Jesus’ particular service appointment was unique (the role of messiah), but it was nevertheless consistent with his human experience

**Empowered by the Holy Spirit**

**1. The Holy Spirit supplied Jesus with the supernatural powers he would need to do the work of messiah**

a. After Jesus was baptized, he was “filled” with the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:22; 4:1)

b. The Holy Spirit supplied the supernatural power that Jesus used during his ministry as messiah (Matt. 12:28; Luke 4:14; 5:17; Acts 2:22; 10:38)

c. The Holy Spirit supplied the supernatural knowledge that Jesus used during his ministry as messiah (Isa. 11:1-2; John 5:30; 8:28-29)

d. Jesus’ miraculous work and knowledge throughout the Incarnation should not be attributed to his own divine nature, but to the empowering of the Holy Spirit

1) The consistent Biblical testimony is to attribute the work of his ministry to the Holy Spirit

2) Having submitted to the will of God in baptism, Jesus then allowed the agenda of his ministry to be set by the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:12)

**2. Jesus’ empowering by the Holy Spirit is consistent with the idea that he was fully human like us**

a. Other men in Biblical times were also empowered with gifts by the Holy Spirit, even with the ability to do miraculous things

1) The old man Simeon was empowered by the Holy Spirit as he waited in the temple for the birth of the messiah (Luke 2:25-27)

2) The apostles were empowered by the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2)

b. We, too, have been given spiritual gifts designed for the particular ministries to which God has called us

c. Jesus’ particular empowerment was unique (the messiah powers), but it was nevertheless consistent with his human experience

**Assisted by Angels**

**1. Angels sometimes provided assistance to Jesus when he was in need**

a. When he was physically weak after having fasted 40 days in the wilderness (Matt. 4:11)

b. When he was physically weak during his prayer in Gethsemane on the eve of his crucifixion (Luke 22:43)

**2. Jesus receiving assistance by angels is consistent with the idea that he was fully human like us**

a. Other men in Biblical times were also assisted by angels in times of distress

1) The apostles were once released from prison by an angel (Acts 5:19-20)

2) Peter was once released from prison by an angel (Acts 12:7-11)

b. We, too, hold out the hope that God’s angels are discreetly working in our behalf as directed by God (Heb. 1:14; 13:2)

c. Jesus’ occasions for angelic assistance were neither unique nor inconsistent with his human experience

**3. The conclusion from all of the Biblical data related to Jesus’ humanity is that he was truly human in every respect**

a. There is nothing in the Biblical text that contradicts the theme of Hebrews 2:17 that he was human like us “in all things”

b. Thus even as we emphasize the deity of Jesus in an age that challenges supernatural ideas, we should never shy away from the doctrine of the humanity of Christ

***No. 11***

**THE INCARNATION**

**The Concept of Incarnation**

**1. Jesus’ dual nature**

a. The theological term “incarnation” refers to the concept of the Son of God adding human nature to his divine nature

1) A person with a dual nature

2) A real man whoalso possesses the nature of deity (Col. 2:9)

b. “Incarnation passages” are those that speak of both the deity and humanity of Christ in the same passage

**2. The Latin term *incarnare***

a. The primary meaning of *incarnare* is the idea of something that is not actually physical (material) being adapted to bodily form

b. When Latin became the language of the Roman Empire and Christian literature, the term *incarnare* was adopted by theology

**3. The difference between incarnation and a theophany**

a. A theophany involves a spiritual being taking on a physical appearance with a certain amount of physical characteristics, but not the full nature and life experiences of that physical body

b. Jesus’ incarnation involved a spiritual being taking on the full nature and life experiences of mankind in addition to the human body

**Pauline Incarnation Passages**

**1. Romans 1:3-4**

a. Jesus is “a descendant of David according to the flesh” (humanity)

b. And he is also “declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead” (deity)

**2. Romans 8:3**

a. Jesus is “the Son of God” (deity)

b. And he is also “the likeness of sinful flesh” (humanity)

**3. Romans 9:5**

a. Jesus is “Christ according to the flesh” (humanity)

b. And he is also “God blessed forever” (deity)

**4. Galatians 4:4**

a. Jesus is God’s “Son” (deity)

b. And he was “born of a woman” (humanity)

**5. Philippians 2:6-8**

a. Jesus “existed in the form of God” and had “equality with God” (deity)

b. And he also had the characteristics of humanity

1) “The form of a bond-servant,” “the likeness of men,” “in appearance as a man”

2) He died a “death on a cross”

**6. Colossians 2:9**

a. Jesus possessed “the fulness of deity” (deity)

b. And he also existed in “bodily form” (humanity)

**7. 1 Timothy 3:16**

a. Jesus was “revealed in the flesh” (humanity)

b. And he was also “vindicated in the Spirit” (deity)

1) The concept of Jesus being “vindicated in the Spirit” refers to Paul’s concept of the Holy Spirit confirming that Jesus is the Son of God by equipping him with miraculous powers and by raising him from the dead (as in Rom. 1:3-4)

2) This statement is in the context of a “poem” in which something heavenly is contrasted with something earthly

a) “Revealed in the flesh” (earthly) vs. “vindicated by the Spirit” (heavenly)

b) “Beheld by angels” (heavenly) vs. “proclaimed among the nations” (earthly)

c) “Believed on in the world” (earthly) vs. “taken up to glory” (heavenly)

**Johannine Incarnation Passages**

**1. John 1:14**

a. Jesus is “the Word” (deity)

b. And he “became flesh” (humanity)

**2. 1 John 1:1-3**

a. Jesus has existed “from the beginning” with God (deity)

1) He is called “the Word of Life” and “the eternal life”

2) He was “in the face of God” from the beginning

a) The Greek phrase: *en pros ton patera*

b) Literally: “in the face of God”

c) Basic idea: to have an intimate (face-to-face) relationship with someone

d) The same divine description of Jesus in John 1:1

b. And on earth he could be seen, heard, and touched (humanity)

**3. 1 John 2:22-23**

a. Jesus is the man “Jesus” (humanity)

b. And he is the divine “Christ” (deity)

1) The context of 1 and 2 John: A critique of an early version of Gnosticism

2) The basic idea of their Christological heresy: a denial of the concept of incarnation

a) A denial that the Son of God (whom the Gnostics called the “Christ”) had taken on real humanity

b) A distinction between “the Son of God” (the “Christ”) and Jesus, the human host

c) The union between the “Christ” and Jesus took place when Jesus was baptized

d) The departure of the “Christ” from the body of Jesus occurred just prior to the death of Jesus

3) The 2nd century church fathers give descriptions of Gnosticism that correspond to the problem John is addressing in his epistles

“The baptism of Jesus who appeared [on earth] was [the Gnostics say] for remission of sins, but the redemption of the Christ who came down upon him, for perfection. . . . Some bring [candidates for baptism] to the water, and baptize them with these words: ‘In the Name of the unknowable Father of all things—in him who came down upon Jesus—into union and redemption and the fellowship of the Powers.’” Irenaeus, *Against Heresies,* 21:2-3

4) The philosophical basis for this heresy

a) The dualistic concept that matter is inherently evil

b) Thus, deity could not be intimately associated with human flesh without being contaminated

**4. 1 John 4:2-3**

a. Jesus is the divine “Christ” (deity)

b. And he is the man “Jesus” who has “come in the flesh” (humanity)

**5. 1 John 5:1**

a. Jesus is the man “Jesus” (humanity)

b. And he is the divine “Christ” (deity)

**6. 1 John 5:5**

a. Jesus is the man “Jesus” (humanity)

b. And he is “the Son of God” (deity)

1) Jesus was declared to be the Son of God by “the Spirit” (1 John 5:8)

a) When the Holy Spirit came upon him in his baptism (Matt. 3:16)

b) When the Holy Spirit empowered him with miraculous abilities (Acts 10:38)

c) When the Holy Spirit raised him from the dead (Rom. 1:4)

2) Jesus was to be the Son of God in the “water” of his baptism (1 John 5:6-8)

a) When God declared from heaven that Jesus was his “beloved Son” (Matt. 3:17)

b) When the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus and fulfilled God’s prophecy to John the Baptist (John 1:33-34)

3) Jesus was declared to be the Son of God in the “blood” of his death (1 John 5:6-8)

a) By darkening the sun for 3 hours (Matt. 27:45)

b) By a great earthquake (Matt. 27:51, 54)

c) By tearing the temple veil (Matt. 27:51)

4) Note: A comparison of this passage (“Jesus is the Son of God”) with 1 John 5:1 (“Jesus is the Christ”) shows that “Christ” is carrying a divine connotation in the context of the Gnostic heresy John is refuting

**7. 2 John 7**

a. Jesus is the divine “Christ” (deity)

b. And he is the man “Jesus” who has “come in the flesh” (humanity)

***No. 12***

**THE SON OF MAN**

**Son of Man**

**1. Jewish uses of the phrase “son of man”**

a. Used prior to the book of Daniel as a general reference to human beings (Psa. 8:4; 80:17; 90 times in the book of Ezekiel)

b. Used after the book of Daniel as a reference to God’s messiah

1) Daniel probably used the phrase “son of man” in Daniel 7:13-14 with its original meaning

2) However, the exalted description of Daniel’s “son of man” apparently led to a more restricted use of the phrase

a) He “came” to (approached) the heavenly throne of the Ancient of Days while riding on the clouds (Dan. 7:13)

b) God gave him authority over all creation for eternity (Dan. 7:14)

c) He received his appointment in the presence of “thousands” and “myriads” of angels (Dan. 7:10)

3) This narrower use of “Son of Man” is reflected in 1 Enoch 37-71 (written sometime between 165 and 80 B.C.)

a) He is a heavenly being who lived in the presence of God before coming to earth

b) He will come to earth at the end of time accompanied by a multitude of angels from heaven

c) He will be appointed by God to be ruler and judge of all creation

4) The Gospels reflect the later Jewish use of “Son of Man” as a synonym for the messiah (John 12:34)

**2. Jesus’ use of the phrase “Son of Man”**

a. Jesus used the phrase “Son of Man” to refer to himself at least 34 times in the Gospels, more than any other phrase

b. Jesus used the phrase in a way that indicated his claim to the heavenly majesty commonly associated with the phrase

1) As Son of Man he had originally lived in heaven prior to being born on earth (John 3:13; 6:62)

2) As Son of Man he would return to the presence of God the Father while riding on the clouds and would then receive from the Father authority over all creation for eternity (Matt. 26:64; John 5:25-27)

3) As Son of Man he would receive his appointment in the presence of the angels of heaven (Matt. 16:27-28; John 1:51)

c. Though the phrase “Son of Man” did not necessarily convey to the Jews the idea of full deity, with Jesus’ usage it did encompass a glory that exceeds that of a normal human being

1) Jesus may have intended for the phrase to hint at deity without actually declaring it

2) Given the context in which Jesus used the phrase, it at the very least lay the groundwork for other phrases that clearly expressed deity

d. Thus “Son of Man” came to serve as an “incarnation phrase” in that it clearly expressed humanity but also implied a “heavenly quality”

**4. The later use of phrase “Son of Man” by the church**

a. The early church apparently did not pick up on this phrase and use it as much for Jesus as they did other titles

1) “Son of Man” is used 34 times in Gospels

2) “Son of Man” is only used 3 times in the rest of the New Testament

3) Likewise, “Son of Man” is rarely found in the church fathers of first 2 centuries

b. The 3 uses of “Son of Man” for Jesus in the New Testament outside the Gospels reflect the heavenly description of Daniel 7 and the usage of Jesus (Acts 7:56; Rev. 1:13; 14:14)

c. However, the trend of the church has been to return to the early Jewish usage of “son of man” and have the phrase refer to the humanity of Jesus Christ

 “. . . Christ, who was ‘descended from David according to the flesh’ and is Son of Man and Son of God.” Ignatius, Ephesians, 20:2

 “‘But when the fullness of time was come, God sent his Son, made of a woman.’ The enemy would not have been justly conquered unless it had been a man of woman who conquered him. For it was by a woman that he had power over man from the beginning, setting himself up in opposition to man. Because of this the Lord also declares himself to be the Son of Man, so renewing in himself that primal man from whom the formation by woman began, that as our race went down to death by a man who was conquered we might ascend again to life by a man who overcame.” Irenaeus, Against Heresies, 21:1

**The Virgin Birth**

**1. A supernatural birth by a virgin is necessary to support the Biblical claim that Jesus possessed a dual nature**

a. Birth from a woman is the only entrance into the world that a divine being can use if he wants to make a credible case for his having become fully human

b. And yet a birth by two human parents without a divine element in Jesus’ “parentage” would undermine his claim to be fully divine

1) One reason the Jews had difficulty accepting Jesus’ claim to deity was that they assumed he had been born from a natural conception (John 6:42)

2) The virgin birth was God’s response to this reasonable objection

3) The popular phrase “virgin birth” is intended to convey the idea of a miraculous **conception**, and not necessarily that the birth itself was miraculous

**2. New Testament references to the Virgin Birth**

a. Matthew 1:20-25

1) Indications of a miraculous conception

a) Mary was “with child by the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 1:18)

b) The child conceived within Mary was “of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 1:20)

2) Indications that Mary was a virgin while she was pregnant

a) Mary was pregnant before she and Joseph “came together” (Matt. 1:18)

b) Joseph “kept her a virgin” until after the birth of Jesus (Matt. 1:25)

b. Luke 1:34-35

1) Indications of a miraculous conception

a) The Holy Spirit “came upon” and “overshadowed” Mary

b) With the result that her baby was to be called “the Son of God”

2) Indications that Mary was a virgin while she was pregnant

a) Mary asked “how can this be, since I am a virgin?”

b) Implying that she understood that the conception predicted by Gabriel would occur while she was still a virgin

**3. References to the Virgin Birth in the early church fathers**

“Regarding our Lord, you are absolutely convinced that on the human side he was actually sprung from David’s line, Son of God according to God’s will and power, actually born of a virgin . . . .”

Ignatius, *Smyrnaens*, 1:1

“The Word, who is the first offspring of God, was born for us without sexual union, as Jesus Christ our Teacher . . . .

. . . We say, as before, that he was begotten by God as the Word of God in a unique manner beyond ordinary birth . . . . We declare that he was born of a virgin . . . .”

Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 21-22

“And again, hear how it was literally prophesied by Isaiah that he would be born of a virgin. He said, ‘Behold the Virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they will call his name, God with us.’ For God testified in advance through the prophetic Spirit that things which are unbelievable and thought impossible among men would happen . . . . For ‘Behold, the Virgin shall conceive’ means that the Virgin would conceive without intercourse. For if she had intercourse with anyone, she would not have been a virgin; but God’s power, coming upon the Virgin, overshadowed her, and caused her to conceive while still remaining a virgin.”

Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 33

“Christ Jesus the Son of God, who on account of his abundant love for his creation submitted to be born of a virgin, himself by himself uniting man to God . . . .”

Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book III, 4:2

**Erroneous Ideas**

**1. The baby Jesus’ presentation in the temple does not contradict the idea of a virgin birth**

a. Some argue that the phrase “the days for **their** purification” (Luke 2:22) refers to the parents, Mary and Joseph, thus implying that the reason Joseph was ceremonially unclean was because he had actually fathered the baby

b. However, the purification ceremony encompassed the mother and child, not the father

1) Leviticus 12 relates the purification to the mother and child, with no reference to the father

2) The reason the father is not included in this ritual is because the ceremonial uncleanness in this case derives from the birth (which does not personally involve the father), rather than the conception (where the father would have been involved)

**2. The Roman Catholic idea of Mary’s immaculate conception is without Biblical support**

a. The phrase “immaculate conception” refers to the miraculous prevention of the transmission of inherited guilt to Mary from her parents, to insure that Mary did not transmit guilt to Jesus

b. The rationale behind this theory is to preserve Jesus from inheriting Adam’s guilt

c. However, there is no need for this theory if you reject the idea of inherited guilt (Jer. 17:10; Ezek. 18; Rev. 20:11-13)

d. Furthermore, there is no reference in the Bible to Mary’s birth

1) Even if the idea of inherited guilt was true, you could not establish from the Biblical text that Mary was untouched

2) If a supernatural act could keep Mary from receiving inherited guilt (if there was such a thing), it could just as well have been used directly on Jesus rather than upon his mother

3) The true motive behind this theory seems to be to honor Mary, rather than simply to preserve Jesus

**3. The Protestant idea that Adam’s guilt is transmitted through the male sperm is without Biblical support**

a. The rationale behind this theory is to preserve Jesus from inheriting Adam’s guilt without contributing to the Roman Catholic adoration of Mary

b. However, there is no need for this theory if you reject the idea of inherited guilt (Jer. 17:10; Ezek. 18; Rev. 20:11-13)

**4. The Roman Catholic idea of Mary’s perpetual virginity contradicts the Scriptures**

a. Roman Catholicism contends that the brothers and sisters of Jesus (Mark 6:3) were Joseph’s children from a previous marriage, and that Mary never engaged in sexual activity throughout her entire life

b. However, this idea is contradicted by the Bible

1) Matthew 1:25 states that Mary remained a virgin until after she gave birth to Jesus, implying that virginity was not maintained within the marriage after Jesus’ birth

2) The description in Luke 2:7 of Jesus as Mary’s “firstborn son” implies that she later had at least one more child

3) There is no reference in the Bible to Joseph having a previous marriage or to Jesus’ brothers and sisters not being born of Mary

**5. The Roman Catholic description of Mary as “Mother of God” is inappropriate**

a. The phrase “mother of God” was first devised in the early church to defend the deity of Christ and affirm that Mary gave birth to a child who possessed deity

1) Greek: *theotokos*

2) The council of Ephesus (431 AD) used this term to affirm the deity of Jesus

b. The historical problem with the phrase “mother of God” is that the emphasis too easily shifts away from affirming the deity of Christ to exalting Mary (as “the Mother of God”)

“So the Lord now manifestly came to his own, and, born by his own created order which he himself bears, he by his obedience on the tree renewed what was done by disobedience with a tree; and that seduction by which the virgin Eve, already betrothed to a man, had been wickedly seduced was broken when the angel in truth brought good tidings to the Virgin Mary, who already belonged to a man. For as Eve was seduced by the word of an angel to flee from God, having rebelled against his Word, so Mary by the word of an angel received the glad tidings that she would bear God by obeying his Word. The former seduced to disobey God, but the latter was persuaded to obey God, so that the Virgin Mary might become the advocate of the virgin Eve. As the human race was subjected to death through a virgin, so was it saved by a virgin, and thus the disobedience of one virgin was precisely balanced by the obedience of another.”

Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book V, 19:1

c. This phrase will naturally lend itself to abuse because by its very design it is focused more upon Mary than upon Jesus, in that “mother” is the subject of the phrase

***No. 13***

**DIVINE RESTRAINTS**

**Incarnation Restrictions**

**1. In order to live like a human, the Son of God had to voluntarily restrict the use of his own divine powers during the incarnation**

a. The Son of God did not forfeit his divine nature, for “all the fulness of deity” remained within his “bodily form” (Col. 2:9)

b. Incarnation required that he not use any divine powers and privileges that are not common to mankind

c. It is a common experience among men for a person in a particular role to accept restrictions upon his activities without implying any loss in his human nature

**2. Paul speaks of the divine restraints of the incarnation as the Son of God “emptying himself”**

a. The Son of God “emptied himself” in order to “take on the form of a bond-servant” (Phil. 2:7)

1) Greek: *ekenosen*

2) English translation: “emptied”

3) Basic idea: refers to an action that reduces the value of something

4) The item itself does not actually change in nature, but simply changes in value (Rom. 4:14; 1 Cor. 1:17; 9:15; 2 Cor. 9:3)

b. In the incarnation the Son of God took on a lesser value (humanity) than he had enjoyed for eternity in heaven

1) Where he had “existed in the form of God” (Phil. 2:6)

2) Where he had “equality with God” in his “grasp” (Phil. 2:6)

c. The New International Version tries to convey this idea with the translation “he made himself nothing”

**3. The Son of God “emptied himself” and “reduced his own value” when he assumed the nature and limitations of humanity**

a. The Son of God changed his appearance in order to look like man (Phil. 2:7-8)

b. The Son of God changed his behavior in order to act like a servant and die like a man (Phil. 2:7-8)

c. For 33 years the Son of God ceased living and acting like deity in order to take on the life experiences of man

d. He moved from a “rich” way of living to a “poor” way of living (2 Cor. 8:9)

e. The Son of God’s “humility” serves as an example for us (Phil. 2:1-5)

**4. There is no Biblical basis for the “kenotic theory” of modern theology**

a. The kenotic theory proposes the idea that the Son of God relinquished his divine nature in the incarnation so that from that time on he no longer exists as deity

b. This “incarnation by divine suicide” would contradict the clear teaching of Scripture regarding the deity of Christ even during the incarnation (Col. 2:9)

**Powers and Privileges Restrained**

**1. The glorious appearance of the Son of God was restricted during the incarnation**

a. The Son of God changed his appearance radically when he “veiled” his radiant glory within a human body

b. The transfiguration of Jesus incident highlights the 2 different appearances of Jesus

1) The transfiguration provided a brief glimpse of the true glory of Jesus that was being restrained during the incarnation (Matt. 17:2; Luke 9:29)

2) What the apostles saw was a “majesty” comparable to that of God himself (2 Pet. 1:16-18)

3) The fact that the transfiguration occurred during the incarnation suggests the idea that Jesus’ divine nature remained available to him even as he chose not to use its powers

c. Jesus anticipated lifting the restraint upon his divine glory after he completed his mission on earth (John 17:5)

**2. The power of the eternal nature of the Son of God was restricted during the incarnation**

a. The Son of God did not take advantage of the life-sustaining power of his eternal nature when he took on the human experiences of physical pain and physical death

b. Yet even as he suffered as a man, Jesus claimed that he was still an eternal being (John 8:56-58)

c. The restraint upon Jesus’ eternal nature was apparently lifted after his resurrection when he announced he would never experience death again (Rev. 1:17-18; 22:13)

**3. The omnipresence of the Son of God was restricted during the incarnation**

a. The Son of God did not take advantage of his ability to be present in all places at the same time when he concentrated his presence within a human body

b. The restraint upon Jesus’ omnipresence was apparently lifted after he completed his mission on earth (Matt. 18:20; 28:20)

**4. The omniscience of the Son of God was restricted during the incarnation**

a. The Son of God did not take advantage of his ability to know all things during his early years when he “increased in wisdom” (Luke 2:40, 52)

b. His omniscience continued to be restrained even into his messiah ministry years

1) Jesus acknowledged that he did not know the date of his second coming (Matt. 24:36)

2) Jesus often asked questions for the purpose of gaining information (Mark 5:30-32; 9:21; John 11:34)

3) Jesus approached a fig tree for which he apparently did not know in advance that there were no figs (Mark 11:13)

c. The divine knowledge that Jesus often displayed throughout his ministry derived from his empowering as messiah by the Holy Spirit (Matt. 12:28; Luke 4:14; 5:17; Acts 10:38)

d. The restraint upon Jesus’ omniscience was apparently lifted after he completed his mission on earth, given that he now claims to be able to know all the thoughts of men (Rev. 2:23)

**5. The omnipotence of the Son of God was restricted during the incarnation**

a. The Son of God did not take advantage of his almighty power when he chose to operate with the limited abilities of a human male body that had to “grow in stature” through the years (Luke 2:40, 52)

b. The miraculous powers that Jesus often displayed throughout his ministry derived from his empowering as messiah by the Holy Spirit (Matt. 12:28; Luke 4:14; 5:17; Acts 10:38)

c. The restraint upon Jesus’ omnipotence should have been lifted after he completed his mission on earth, as was the case with the restraints upon his other powers

**6. The divine authority of the Son of God was restricted during the incarnation**

a. The Son of God did not take advantage of his power to require creatures to serve and worship him

b. Nevertheless, at times Jesus provided a brief glimpse of the authority being restrained

1) In the way he conveyed authority in his teaching (as in “but **I** say . . .”)

2) In the manner in which he performed his nature miracles and cast out demons (as if he was personally in charge of creation)

c. The restraint upon Jesus’ authority was apparently lifted after he completed his mission on earth

1) Jesus is now said to be seated on the throne of God (Acts 2:33-36)

2) Jesus is now said to be the Lord of creation (Matt. 28:18; Phil. 2:9-11)

**Erroneous Ideas**

**1. The Lutheran idea of *communicatio idiomatum* is without Biblical support**

a. The basic idea is that following Jesus’ ascension his divine attributes permeated his physical body and gave it divine qualities

b. The rationale behind this theory is to explain the Lutheran view of the Lord’s Supper

1) Lutheran theology maintains that Jesus’ “real presence” is actually within the bread and juice of the Lord’s Supper

2) Jesus’ physical body can be literally present within the Lord’s Supper in all its places of observance because his physical body has absorbed the divine qualities of omnipresence (and invisibility)

c. However, there is no reference in the Bible to the idea of Jesus’ physical body taking on divine qualities

d. Nor is there any Biblical basis for thinking that Jesus’ body is actually present inside the bread

1) At the original institution of the ceremony Jesus’ body was obviously not inside the bread he was breaking

2) By speaking of the Lord’s Supper as a memorial (1 Cor. 11:24-25) Jesus implied that his body would not actually be present in the ceremony, but would be “remembered” during the ceremony

**2. The Reformed idea of *extra-calvinisticum* is without Biblical support**

a. The basic idea is that the Son of God continued to exercise some of his divine powers throughout the full incarnation period

1) He never ceased to fill the universe even as he was within a human body

2) His miraculous powers and knowledge as messiah were drawn from his own divine omnipotence and omniscience as needed

3) Thus each time he displayed divine power during his ministry he was testifying to his divine nature because he was using the power of his divine nature

b. However, this idea is not consistent with the Biblical data that he “emptied himself” and restricted the use of his divine powers (Phil. 2:7) in order to be like us “in all things” (Heb. 2:17)

c. Nor is it consistent with the Biblical emphasis upon his being empowered by the Holy Spirit (Matt. 12:28; Luke 4:14; 5:17; Acts 10:38)

1) The miracles of Jesus’ ministry do testify to his deity

2) But not because they derive from his own divine nature, but because they come from God and thus serve as an accreditation by God of Jesus’ claim to be divine (Acts 2:22)

d. The idea of the baby Jesus sleeping in the manager while at the same time his mind runs the operations of the universe does not fit the New Testament emphasis that he was going through human experiences in the same manner we do (Heb. 2:17)

***No. 14***

**REDEMPTION ROLES**

**God’s Only Begotten Son**

1. **The idea of Jesus as God’s Son is used throughout the Bible in 3 different ways**

a. To emphasize Jesus’ divine nature as fully equal with God (Luke 22:70-71; John 5:17-18; 19:7)

b. To emphasize Jesus’ incarnation role as the messiah sent to accomplish God’s redemption plan (John 5:19-20; 8:28)

c. To emphasize Jesus’ incarnation role as heir to God’s authority over creation (Psa. 2:7-8; Heb. 1:2, 4-5)

**2. The Biblical imagery of “Father” and “Son” relate to the work of God within redemption history**

a. Most Biblical descriptions of the Godhead refer to the “economic Trinity”

1) The roles each divine person has chosen to carry out as part of the scheme of redemption

2) With an emphasis upon their “economy” or work, and not upon their inherent nature as God

b. The Bible provides very little information regarding the “ontological Trinity”

**3. Biblical references to Jesus as God’s “only begotten Son” refer to his ontological nature as being fully divine**

a. The phrase “only begotten Son” is a Johannine expression used only 5 times in the New Testament (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9)

b. The basic idea is that Jesus is God’s Son in a unique way because of his divine nature

1) Greek: *monogenes*

2) Greek derivation:

a) *genos*: a thing’s origin, race, or kind

b) *monos*: the number one

3) The combination of *genos* and *monos* produces the idea of a thing being the only one of its kind

4) When God sent his only begotten Son to earth (John 1:14; 1 John 4:9) to die for the world (John 3:16), he sent “the only one of his kind”

**4. Referring to Jesus as God’s “only begotten” should not imply that the Son of God was somehow born or produced from God the Father in eternity past**

a. It is incorrect to suggest that the Son of God originally existed only in the mind of God until he was given an independent existence

b. This idea is based upon a faulty understanding of the etymology and meaning of *monogenes*

1) Some have assumed that *monogenes* derives from the Greek word *gennao* which means to give birth to something

2) But as noted above, the actual derivation is *genos*, a thing’s origin, race, or kind

c. This idea is also based upon a faulty interpretation of John 5:26

“For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself.” (John 5:26)

1) Some have understood this verse to refer to the Father giving the Son a separate existence at some point in the past

“The Son of God is [God’s] Word in idea and in actuality . . . . He is the first offspring of the Father. I do not mean that he was created, for, since God is eternal mind, he had his Word within himself from the beginning, being eternally wise. Rather did the Son come forth from God to give form and actuality to all material things . . . . The prophetic Spirit agrees with this opinion when he says, ‘The Lord created me as the first of his ways, for his works.’” Athanagoras, *Plea*, 10

2) But John 5:26 does not refer to the source of the Son’s own life, but to the source of his ability to give life to others (as is evident in the full context of John 5:25-29)

**5. Referring to Jesus as God’s “only begotten” should not imply that the Son of God is somehow always being generated by God the Father**

a. It is incorrect to suggest that God the Father has from eternity past supplied life to the Son

1) This idea allows that the Son of God has always existed in a real sense, but that his existence has always been dependent upon the power of God the Father

2) Since this process has no beginning, it is referred to as the “eternal generation” of the Son

b. This idea is based upon another faulty interpretation of John 5:26

1) Some have understood this verse to refer to the Father continuously giving the Son the power to exist

2) But John 5:26 does not refer to the source of the Son’s own life, but to the source of his ability to give life to others (as is evident in the full context of John 5:25-29)

**God’s Firstborn Son**

**1. Biblical references to Jesus as God’s “firstborn Son” refer to his incarnation role as heir to God’s authority over creation**

a. In a context discussing Jesus’ authority over God’s creation, the natural meaning of the phrase “firstborn Son” would be to Jesus’ messianic role as God’s “primogenitor”

1) Greek: *prototokos*

2) Basic idea: the person selected to receive the major portion of a family inheritance, as well as the father’s name and authority

b. A reference to Jesus as God’s “firstborn” heir would have no implication upon the Son of God’s origin or nature, because it focuses solely upon a duty he fulfills in behalf of God’s scheme of redemption

1) To be a man’s “firstborn” would not necessarily require that the primogenitor actually be his son, since a man could select anyone he wished (as in Gen. 15:2-4)

2) A primogenitor acts **as if he had been** the oldest son born to a man (as in Gen. 17:18-21; 25:31-34; 27:32-37)

**2. Referring to Jesus as God’s “firstborn Son” should not imply that the Son of God was the first thing created by God**

a. It is incorrect to suggest that the Son of God was the first being God created, and then empowered to create **the rest of creation**

b. This idea is based upon a faulty interpretation of Colossians 1:15

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things have been created through Him and for Him.” (Col. 1:15-16)

1) The Jehovah’s Witnesses maintain that Paul intends to say that “all (other) things” were created by Jesus

2) But Colossians 1:15 does not refer to the origin of the Son of God, but to his appointment of authority over all creation, including the church (Col. 1:15-18)

c. This idea is also based upon a similar faulty interpretation of Hebrews 1:6

“And when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says, ‘and let all the angels of God worship him.’” (Heb. 1:6)

1) The Jehovah’s Witnesses assume that this verse refers to the time of creation, when God first created the Son, and then he in turn created the angels

2) But the idea of Jesus as God’s primogenitor Son with authority over the angels has already been established within this context (Heb. 1:2-5)

**The Obedient Servant**

**1. Jesus frequently acknowledged his role as a servant in submission to the will of God the Father**

a. The work that Jesus did had been assigned by God the Father (John 4:34; 17:4)

b. The will of God the Father superseded his own desires (John 5:30; 6:38)

c. The authority of God the Father was greater than his own (John 14:28)

d. Jesus even spoke of the Father as “my God” (John 20:17; Rom. 15:6; Rev. 1:6; 3:12)

**2. Biblical references to the submission of the Son to the Father are best understood as part of their incarnation roles in behalf of the scheme of redemption**

a. As human experience illustrates, relationship roles have no necessary bearing upon the inherent nature and dignity of the persons involved

1) Human beings take on a variety of role relationships

2) Without any diminishing of our inherent human nature and dignity

b. Likewise, the 3 divine persons of the Godhead should be able to choose various roles in relation to one another without necessarily affecting their inherent divine nature and dignity

c. Thus Jesus often intermingled his “submission statements” with “equality statements” (John 5:17-23; 14:9-10)

**3. It was necessary for the incarnate Son to experience submission to God while on earth in order to “be like us in all things” (Heb. 2:17)**

a. In order to qualify as our substitutionary atonement, the Son of God had to “learn” or experience submission to the will of God (Heb. 5:8-9)

b. In order to fulfill messianic prophecy, the Son of God had to practice obedience to God rather than the sacrifice of more animals (Heb. 10:5-10)

c. In order to fulfill his role in the scheme of redemption, the Son of God had to give both “active obedience” and “passive obedience” to God

1) Active obedience: a submission to the demands of the law of God, that he might be a **sinless** priest and sacrifice

2) Passive obedience: a submission to the penalty of the law of God, that he would pay the penalty for our sins

**The Suffering Savior**

**1. As part of his incarnation role, the Son of God suffered humiliation in the incarnation itself**

a. Christology uses the term “humiliation” to refer to those experiences in the incarnation that are less than that to which deity is naturally accustomed and entitled

1) Exalted deity was born as a baby

2) Infinite deity had to exist within the confinements of a human body and a human mind

3) Omnipotent deity had to live in submission to the authority of others (both human and divine)

b. In the incarnation the “riches” of God’s heavenly throne were traded in for a condition of “poverty” (2 Cor. 8:9)

**2. As part of his incarnation role, the Son of God suffered humiliation in his death at Calvary**

a. While hanging on the cross the Son of God experienced even greater humiliations than previously felt during the incarnation

1) Righteous deity had to experience the shame of dying a criminal’s death on a cross

2) Holy deity had to experience the shame and emotional trauma of bearing the sins of the world

3) Eternal deity had to experience physical suffering and death

b. Death on the cross was the ultimate humiliation for the Son of God (Phil. 2:8; Heb. 2:9)

***No. 15***

**ERRONEOUS IDEAS**

**REGARDING THE INCARNATION**

**Docetism**

**1. Docetism (late 1st cent.) maintained that the Son of God did not actually have a physical body, but simply created the appearance of a body**

a. Jesus’ body was thought to be some type of apparition that looked like a real physical body

 “Regarding our Lord, you are absolutely convinced that on the human side he was actually sprung from David’s line, Son of God according to God’s will and power, actually born of a virgin . . . and actually crucified for us in the flesh . . . . For it was for our sakes that he suffered all this, to save us. And he genuinely suffered, as even he genuinely raised himself. It is not as some unbelievers say, that his Passion was a sham. It’s they who are a sham! Yes, and their fate will fit their fancies—they will be ghosts and apparitions.” Ignatius, *Smyrnaeans*, 1:1-2:1

 “Yet in their ignorance some deny him—or rather have been denied by him, since they advocate death rather than the truth. The prophets and the law of Moses have failed to convince them—nay, to this very day the gospel and sufferings of each one of us have also failed, for they class our sufferings with Christ’s. What good does anyone do me by praising me and then reviling my Lord by refusing to acknowledge that he carried around live flesh? He who denies this has completely disavowed him and carries a corpse around. The names of these people, seeing they are unbelievers, I am not going to write down. No, far be it from me even to recall them until they repent and acknowledge the Passion, which means our resurrection.” Ignatius, *Smyrnaeans*, 5:1-3

b. The underlying rationale for this idea:

1) The dualistic concept that matter is inherently evil

2) Deity could not be intimately associated with human flesh without being contaminated

c. “Docetism” is derived from the Greek word *dokeo* which means to appear to be something

**2. Docetism maintained the full deity of Jesus, but at the expense of his humanity**

**Gnosticism**

**1. Gnosticism (early 2nd cent.) maintained that the Son of God took possession of the body of the man Jesus**

a. The basic idea:

1) The Son of God (the “Christ”) is a spiritual being distinct from Jesus his human host

2) The union between the “Christ” and Jesus took place when Jesus was baptized

3) The “Christ” left the body of Jesus just before Jesus died

b. The underlying rationale for this idea:

1) The dualistic concept that matter is inherently evil

2) Deity could not be intimately associated with human flesh without being contaminated

c. “Gnosticism: is derived from the Greek word *gnosis* which means knowledge

d. Notable proponents

1) Cerinthus (2nd century)

2) Marcion (2nd century)

**2. Gnosticism maintained the full deity of Christ, but at the expense of his humanity**

**Apollinarianism**

**1. Apollinaris the Younger, bishop of Laodicea (4th cent.) maintained that in the incarnation the Son of God only acquired the physical nature of man**

a. The basic idea

1) The Son of God only used the physical (“fleshly”) part of human nature

2) He did not work with such things as the human reasoning capacity or human emotions

b. The underlying rationale for this idea:

1) To protect the Son of God from being susceptible to error and sin by having to work with human reason and emotions

2) Working with the assumption that it is not possible for a human being to live a totally sinless life

**2. Apollinarianism maintained the full deity of Christ, but at the expense of his humanity**

**Adoptionism**

**1. Adoptionists (beginning late 1st cent.) maintained that the man Jesus was simply given an honorary divine title and a status superior to other men**

. The basic idea

1) The human Jesus was given supernatural powers (which were called “the Christ”) at his baptism because of his righteous lifestyle

2) At his resurrection he was given some of the titles of deity in something of an honorary fashion (not quite on the level of true deity)

b. The underlying rationale for this idea:

1) The assumption that passages that speak of Jesus as having been chosen to be God’s “Son” imply that he was not an actual deity

2) He must have been just a human favored by God

c. Notable proponents

1) The Ebionites (end of the 1st century)

2) Paul of Samosota (3rd century)

3) The Paulicians (medieval)

**2. Adoptionism maintained the full humanity of Jesus, but at the expense of his deity**

**Arianism**

**1. Arianism (4th cent.) maintained that the Son of God was created as a lesser deity**

a. The basic idea

1) God is so far removed (transcendent) from physical reality that he needed a semi-divine being who could work with created things in his behalf

2) God created the Son of God as a lesser deity capable of interacting with creation so much that he can become human

b. The underlying rationale for this idea:

1) To account for the subordination references to Jesus

2) To preserve the oneness of God while acknowledging the supernatural nature of Jesus

c. Notable proponents

1) Justin Martyr (2nd century): God took a part of his eternal self (the “logos”) and gave it a separate existence as the Son

2) Arius, a presbyter of Alexandria (4th century): “there was a time when the Son was not”

**2. Arianism maintained the full humanity of Jesus, but at the expense of his deity**

**Sabellianism**

**1. Sabellius of Rome (3rd cent.) maintained that Jesus was nothing more than another manifestation of the person known as God the Father**

a. The basic idea

1) There exists only one divine person who takes on the appearances of three divine persons

2) The incarnation was nothing more than a theophany

b. The underlying rationale for this idea:

1) To account for references where Jesus identifies himself closely with the Father

2) To preserve the oneness of God while acknowledging the supernatural nature of Jesus

c. Names for this heresy

1) Sabellianism (beginning 3rd century)

2) Modalistic Monarchianism (beginning 3rd century)

3) Patripassianism (beginning 3rd century)

**2. Sabellianism maintained both humanity and deity in Jesus, but lost the distinction of person within the Godhead and their respective redemption roles**

**Eutychianism**

**1. Eutyches the archimandrite (early 5th cent.) maintained that Jesus possessed a unique hybrid nature that was neither human nor divine**

a. The basic idea

1) When the divine nature joined with the human nature they fused to become a brand new nature

2) This unique nature has some of the properties of the two original natures, but is not to be identified fully with either

b. The underlying rationale for this idea:

1) To protect Jesus from the appearance of possessing a multiple personality

2) Working with the assumption that two natures requires more than one consciousness

c. Notable proponents

1) The Monophysites (5th century): emphasizing “one nature”

2) The Monothelites (7th century): emphasizing “one will or mind”

**2. Eutychianism made reference to Jesus’ humanity and deity, but then relinquished both in favor of some undetermined third nature**

**Modern Christology**

**1. Modern theology has tended to view Jesus as a man with a religious nature commendable enough that he should be honored with the title “Son of God”**

a. The basic idea

1) Jesus was a man who reached an exceptionally high degree of spirituality

2) He is referred to by deity terms only as a way of honoring his godly living (an ethical divinity)

3) His mission was to show others how to live a godly life and become “sons of God”

4) Biblical accounts of his divine nature and miraculous acts are religious myth

b. The underlying rationale for this idea:

1) To explain the life of Jesus without recourse to supernatural ideas

2) Working with the absolute principle: no supernatural is possible

c. Early proponents of this new interpretation of the incarnation

1) Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768-1834): Jesus possessed a superior “God-consciousness”

2) Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1889): Jesus has the value of God in our lives in that he showed us how to live a righteous life

3) Peter Taylor Forsyth (1848-1921)

a) Salvation essentially involves learning how to change your mind and will toward things that are good

b) Since Jesus was able to focus his mind and will on good, he is to be called “divine”

c) Christians are becoming “divine” by degrees as they work on improving their own minds and will

**2. Modern theology maintains the full humanity of Jesus, but at the expense of his deity**

**Religionsgeschichtliche Christology**

**1. The Religionsgeschichtliche (history of religion) school of theology explains the idea of Jesus’ deity as a later development within Christianity**

a. The basic idea

1) Christianity borrowed its ideas from its Jewish and Gentile environment

2) There is no supernatural revelation

b. A key representative: Wilhelm Bousset and his book *Kyrios Christos* (1913, 1921)

1) Bousset’s stated goal: to explain the ideas of Christianity without reference to supernatural activity

2) His stated rationale: reports of supernatural activity are improbable

3) His basic assumption regarding Jesus: he was human only and never claimed a divine nature

4) His method of dealing with the Biblical data: try to suggest the stages by which the story of Jesus changed from that of an ordinary human being to the New Testament picture of the divine Son of God

5) Bousset’s proposed development:

a) The original Jesus: a teacher of righteousness with no deity, no miracles, and no supernatural claims

b) The early Jewish Christians added: the Jewish apocalyptic interpretation of “Son of Man” picturing Jesus as the judge of creation at the end of time

c) Later Gentile Christians added: the Gentile religious use of *kurios*, picturing Jesus as the God-appointed ruler of the church now

d) Paul added: the pagan concept of mystical union with a spiritual power, picturing Jesus as the personal ruler within the individual Christian’s heart

e) John added: the Greek philosophical idea of the *logos*, picturing Jesus as the earthly manifestation of divine “reason” (or words of God)

c. Some problems with the Religionsgeschichtliche school approach to Christology

1) The anti-supernatural bias prevents them from seriously considering the interpretation of Jesus presented by the Biblical text itself

2) The fact that Christianity has ideas in common with other groups does not prove that Christianity borrowed these ideas from them

3) The emphasis upon Paul’s Gentile background (and his borrowing from pagan religions) does not do justice to Paul’s Jewish background

4) Peter’s first sermon in Acts 2:32-36 sounds very “Pauline” (or “Greek”) with its emphasis upon Jesus as Lord

5) The proposal that Jesus never made a claim to deity is not supported by the New Testament or early Christian literature

**2. The Religionsgeschichtliche school maintains the full humanity of Jesus, but at the expense of his deity**

**Heilsgeschichte Christology**

**1. The Heilsgeschichte (history of salvation) school of theology explains the idea of Jesus’ deity as simply a reference to his powerful ministry**

a. The basic idea

1) The key to understanding the Bible is to view it as a creative story about God’s redemption

2) The accuracy of the details of the Bible are secondary to the general lesson derived regarding redemption

3) Thus the Christological descriptions of Jesus in the New Testament are more functional than they are ontological in that they do a better job of describing what Jesus did than of identifying who Jesus was

b. A basic assumption for this idea:

1) There was no real supernatural element in the nature of Jesus or in his activities

2) The supernatural descriptions of Jesus were originally intended to represent the powerful manner in which he pursued the will of God

3) It was in later reflection that the church looked at the exalted descriptions and wondered if perhaps they might actually describe the nature of Jesus

c. A key “conservative” representative: Oscar Cullmann and his book *The Christology of the New Testament* (1957)

1) Cullmann did not deny that Jesus could be a divine person, but he did not think the data necessarily proved that he was

2) While his work into historical backgrounds has some value for conservative thinkers, he tended to lay the groundwork for more liberal ideas relating to Christology

d. A key liberal representative: Ferdinand Hahn and his book *The Titles of Jesus in Christology* (1963)

1) The church first used the Christological titles to describe the work of Jesus

2) Later the church worked in reverse and applied those same titles to the person of Jesus

e. The key problem with the Heilsgeschichte school approach to Christology

1) Many Christological descriptions do not make sense restricted only to a functional meaning (that is, as a description of Jesus’ work)

a) “Son of God”

b) “Before Abraham was born, I AM” (John 8:58)

c) “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28)

d) “In him all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form” (Col. 2:9)

2) These types of expression are obviously attempting to give an ontological meaning regarding Jesus (that is, a description of his nature)

**2. The Heilsgeschichte school maintains the full humanity of Jesus, but at the expense of his deity**

**The Myth of God Incarnate**

**1. The “Myth of God incarnate” proponents explain the deity of Jesus as a modern idea read back into the Biblical text**

a. The basic idea

1) The incarnation is a myth the church has read back into the New Testament

2) When read properly, the Bible does not actually present the idea of a real “God-man”

b. The key work: John Hick (editor) and his book *The Myth of God Incarnate* (1977)

1) Jesus was a normal human only with no pre-existence or virgin birth

2) The significance of Jesus’ life for Christians is in his “faith-response” to God

3) Jesus was a “son of God” in the metaphorical sense that he was committed to God’s will

4) Jesus’ death was a martyrdom, but not an atonement for sin

c. The key problem with the Myth of God incarnate approach to Christology

1) It is not possible to study the New Testament honestly and not see any claim for Jesus’ deity and incarnation

2) The more honest approach within liberal Christology is simply to say that the New Testament does claim deity for Jesus, but that the writers were mistaken

**2. As is typical with the Christology devised by modern theology, the Myth of God incarnate proponents maintain the full humanity of Jesus, but at the expense of his deity**

a. The efforts of modern theology can be well summarized by the following:

“In the beginning, God created man in his image, and ever since then, it seems, man has been trying to return the favor.”

Tom McNichol, “The Many Faces of Jesus,” *USA Weekend* (Dec. 18-20, 1992):4

b. A more profitable attitude for the study of Jesus Christ can be illustrated by one of the 2nd century church father

“This is he who was from the beginning, who appeared new and was found to be old, and is ever born young in the hearts of the saints.”

*Letter to Diognetus*, 11:4:

***No. 16***

**JESUS’ PRIMARY MISSION**

**The Suffering Messiah**

**1. The Son of God came to earth for the primary purpose of bringing salvation to mankind through the suffering of the cross**

a. Anselm of Canterbury (c.1033-1109) titled one of his books with a classic Christological question:

1) *Cur Deus Homo?*

2) Translation: Why the God-man?

b. Anselm’s question: what was the primary purpose in the Son of God coming to live on earth as a man?

c. The Biblical answer: Jesus’ primary mission was to bring salvation from sin through the suffering and death he would experience on the cross of Calvary

**2. The key emphasis of the Old Testament messianic prophecies is the suffering of Calvary**

a. God established a pattern for messianic prophecies in Genesis 3:15

1) The first messianic prophecy

2) Also known as the “protoevangelium”

b. The pattern for messianic prophecies:

1) Salvation from sin will come through a man appointed by God

2) Salvation from sin will require that this messiah suffer

c. The idea of the suffering messiah is scattered throughout the Old Testament

1) As in the “messianic Psalms” (such as Psa. 22)

2) As in the “suffering servant passages” of Isaiah (notably Isa. 53)

**3. The key emphasis of the gospel message of the New Testament is the suffering of Calvary**

a. The apostles emphasized the Old Testament “suffering messiah” passages in their preaching (Acts 17:2-3; 1 Cor. 15:3-4)

b. The cross became the heart of the gospel message (1 Cor. 1:18, 21-24; 2:2; Gal. 6:14)

c. The grand theme of worship in heaven for eternity will be “worthy is the Lamb that was slain” (Rev. 5:9-14)

**Jesus’ Messianic Self-Awareness**

**1. Jesus set his ministry on a course towards the cross**

a. Jesus clearly understood that his primary mission was to provide salvation for sinners by means of his own suffering and death (Mark 10:45)

1) From the time he began his ministry at his baptism, he understood from John the Baptist’s testimony that he was the sacrificial “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29)

2) In his first public messianic message Jesus spoke of his “temple” (body) being destroyed by the Jewish leaders (John 2:19-22)

b. Jesus’ understanding of his messianic mission stood in sharp contrast to most (if not all) of his Jewish contemporaries (Matt. 16:21-13)

1) Judaism did not fully understand the Old Testament prophecies of a divine messiah

a) The “deity” passages were interpreted as figurative, indicating God’s favor toward the messiah

b) The focus of Jewish messianic studies was upon his “son of David” lineage

2) Judaism did not fully understand the Old Testament prophecies of a suffering messiah

a) The “suffering servant” prophecies were interpreted as referring to someone other than the messiah

b) The focus of Jewish messianic studies was upon the “royal” prophecies

**2. Jesus understood specific details of God’s messianic plan**

a. Jesus announced near the beginning of his ministry that crucifixion would be the means for his death (John 3:14)

b. Jesus announced near the beginning of his ministry that he would remain dead for a three day period and then be resurrected to life (John 2:19-22)

c. Jesus announced one year prior to his death that it would be the Jewish leaders who would kill him in Jerusalem (Matt. 16:21)

d. Jesus announced one year prior to his death that his death would be arranged by a traitor from among his own disciples (John 6:70-71)

e. Jesus announced during his “final week” visit to Jerusalem that this would be the occasion for his death (Matt. 26:2; John 12:23-24, 27)

**3. Jesus’ distinct “messianic self-awareness” may have come to him by one or more means**

a. From a personal revelation from the Holy Spirit

b. From his parents retelling the events and statements surrounding his birth

c. From his own study of the Old Testament prophecies

**4. Jesus may have been instructed by some early unrecorded supernatural revelations**

a. The Bible does not record any supernatural interaction between Jesus and God prior to his baptism

b. But considering that others around him did receive revelations prior to the baptism, it is possible that Jesus did as well

1) His forerunner John the Baptist received instructions regarding his ministry through a revelation from God (John 1:33)

2) His parents received information regarding his identity and mission through the revelation of the angel Gabriel (Matt. 1:20-21; Luke 1:31-35)

3) Zacharias, the shepherds, and Simeon all received information regarding Jesus through revelations from God (Luke 1:13-17; 2:10-14, 25-27)

c. Whatever did (or did not) happen prior to his baptism, revelation by the Holy Spirit was a significant guide for Jesus after he was empowered by the Holy Spirit

**5. Jesus was likely influenced by his parents**

a. Jesus’ statement to his parents at age 12 implies that they were instrumental in his messianic self-awareness (Luke 2:49)

1) Some sense of God as his Father in a special way: “my Father’s house”

2) Some sense of a calling to a divinely appointed task: “I had to be in . . .”

3) Surprise that his parents had been “anxiously” searching for him at other locations

b. The supernatural experiences surrounding the birth of Jesus may have impacted the way Mary and Joseph raised their son

1) At the very least they would have placed a special emphasis in their home upon his spiritual development

2) But at some point they may also have shared with their son stories about the unusual circumstances surrounding his birth

**6. The nativity stories provide a “hermeneutical key” that can unlock Old Testament messianic prophecies**

a. Regarding the unique (divine) nature of the Messiah

1) Jesus would be “conceived of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 1:20)

2) Jesus would be called “Immanuel . . . God with us” (Matt. 1:23)

3) Jesus would be called “the Son of the Most High” and “the Son of God” (Luke 1:32, 35)

b. Regarding the suffering death of the Messiah

1) Jesus was to “save his people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21)

2) Jesus would be “a sign opposed” (Isa. 8:1-4, 16-18) for whom “a sword would pierce his soul” (Luke 2:34-35)

c. The information available to Jesus from his parents and the Old Testament prophecies may have been all he had early on to form his messianic self-awareness and accept God’s call at his baptism

***No. 17***

**JESUS’ SECONDARY TASKS**

**The Master Teacher**

**1. Jesus’ teaching ministry was a supplemental aid to his primary mission as the suffering Savior**

a. For Jesus’ work at Calvary to be successful in its practical application, it was necessary that he prepare some disciples to announce the availability of his salvation

b. Thus Jesus invested more time in teaching sessions with his smaller groups of disciples than with the large crowds

**2. Jesus taught with a spirit of authority that was distinct and impressive to his audience**

a. His authority favorably impressed the common crowd (Luke 4:31-32)

b. While Jewish teachers typically taught by citing rabbinical sources, Jesus spoke with an authority drawn from within himself (Matt. 7:28-29)

1) In contrast to what “you have heard said” by the scribes, Jesus simply stated “but I say” (Matt. 5:27-28, 31-34)

2) His authoritative manner was so impressive that it intimidated the soldiers who were sent to arrest him (John 7:45-46)

**3. Jesus used the unusual teaching technique of “deliberate ambiguity”**

a. Jesus often chose methods of teaching that served more to puzzle his audience than to enlighten them

b. The parables of Jesus were not easily understood by his listeners (Matt. 13:10-15, 34-35)

c. The figures of speech and symbolism of Jesus were not easily understood by his listeners

1) Jesus was especially cryptic in his language when he spoke of his mission as messiah

a) “Destroy this temple” (John 2:19-22)

b) “Eat my flesh” (John 6:53-58)

c) “In a little while you will no longer see me, in a little while you will see me” (John 16:16-22, 25)

2) Jesus knew that his figurative language was not readily grasped by those who heard him, and this was as he intended (John 16:25)

d. One reason Jesus spoke in parables and figures was to thin out the large crowds that interfered with his ministry (John 6:59-62, 66)

e. Another reason Jesus spoke in parables and figures was to plant seed ideas within his serious disciples that would later bloom with meaning after his death and resurrection

1) Jesus did not want to discourage his serious disciples (John 6:67-70)

2) Thus he encouraged them to think about what he taught and promised them that the meaning would become evident in due time (John 14:28-29; 16:25, 29-33)

3) Jesus’ parables and figures began to make sense to his disciples after his death and resurrection (John 2:19-22)

**4. The later teaching of the apostles was a continuation of the teaching ministry of Jesus**

a. Jesus commissioned his apostles to teach everything he would send to them through the revelation and inspiration of the Holy Spirit (John 15:26-27)

b. The teaching ministry of the apostles was to be more comprehensive than that of Jesus

1) The apostles would not only repeat what Jesus had said, but would teach things not mentioned by Jesus during his earthly ministry (John 14:25-26; 1 Cor. 7:10, 12)

2) Also, the apostles’ teaching would accomplish the massive number of conversions that Jesus’ teaching never achieved (nor intended to achieve)

c. The apostles used teaching methods that sought “clear instruction” rather than the “deliberate ambiguity” technique of Jesus

1) Jesus promised the apostles that his emphasis upon figurative language would give way to plain speaking after his death and resurrection (John 16:25)

2) Jesus also promised the apostles that the Holy Spirit would work through them to bring about an enlightenment of minds and hearts (John 16:7-15)

3) The written results of their commission to teach is the New Testament, which is written in a fashion that promises to be profitable for all who read it (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

**The Miracle Worker**

**1. The primary purpose for Jesus’ miracles was to confirm his claims regarding his identity and mission**

a. Jesus’ miracles served as divine credentials for his messianic work

1) Not that they were supposed to represent his own divine powers as the Son of God

2) But that they represent the power of God working through him as a divine validation of his claims (Acts 2:22)

3) Thus Jesus would point to his miraculous empowering by God as a “witness” to himself (Luke 7:19-22; John 5:20, 36; 10:25, 37-38)

b. Jesus was conscious of the need to get the full witness effect out of his miracles (Mark 5:30-34; John 11:41-42)

**2. The miracles of Jesus were comparable to other Bible miracles**

a. Jesus’ miracles do not excel all other miracle-workers in **quantity**

1) Jesus promised that his disciples would do greater works than he had done in his years of ministry (John 14:12)

2) One difference between the miraculous ministry of Jesus and that of his own apostles was the limited circumstances of his ministry

a) Jesus was one man with only 3 ½ years to minister in a small section of the world

b) He would not be able to match the amount of miraculous activity that would be done by 12 apostles (and others they equipped with miraculous gifts) with a lifetime to minister to the world at large

b. Jesus’ miracles do not excel all other miracle-workers in **quality**

1) Jesus did not try to dream up new types of miracles that would outperform all other miracle workers

2) Instead, he tended to concentrate upon the “staples” of miracle-working ministries: healing and casting out demons

3) Since any supernatural act can serve as a validation from God, Jesus did not need any unique miraculous powers in order to validate his messianic claims

**3. Jesus’ miracle working ministry was a supplemental aid to his primary mission as the suffering Savior**

a. For Jesus’ work at Calvary to be successful in its practical application, it was necessary that he give people a reason to believe his exceptional claims

1) In an age when many claimed to be a messiah (Matt. 24:5, 23-26), the Jews deserved to see some divine confirmation for the true messiah

2) Thus Jesus invested a lot of time in performing miracles, sometimes healing for hours at a time, in order to give his claims maximum credibility

b. Since working miracles was not Jesus primary mission, he did not feel obligated to use his miraculous powers to heal every sick person he met

1) He could walk near the pool of Bethesda with its large number of sick people (John 5:1-3) and choose to heal only one man (John 5:8)

2) He could run away from a town where the crowd wanted more healings when their large number of requests interfered with his preaching ministry (Mark 1:32-38; Luke 4:42)

3) He could discourage a woman who begged him to heal her daughter because he was seeking a quiet retreat (Matt. 15:21-28)

4) He could forgive a sick man’s sins, and then only add a healing if it served his purposes (Mark 2:5-12)

**4. Jesus’ miracles suffered from the same weaknesses of all Bible miracles**

a. It is the nature of miracles to be open to suspicion and misinterpretation

b. For the most part the people who saw Jesus’ miracles were not persuaded of his messianic claims

1) The Jewish leaders granted that Jesus could perform miracles, but refused to be persuaded regarding his claims (Matt. 9:34; 12:22-24; John 11:47-48)

2) The general populace enjoyed the immediate benefits of his miracles (John 6:26), but found it easier to believe he was a prophet than that he was a divine messiah (Matt. 16:13-14; John 7:12)

c. Jesus owed it to the Jews to back up his messianic claims with miracles, but he was not so naive as to imagine that people would be brought to faith by supernatural acts (Luke 16:27-31)

**The Moral Example**

**1. The Biblical record of Jesus’ life on earth provides us with an excellent pattern of proper moral conduct**

a. By showing us a perfectly sinless life, Jesus gives us a truer model to imitate than the fallible examples of the even the best of the saints

b. By living out his moral perfection in a human context, Jesus gives us a more realistic model than the intangible example of invisible deity

**2. Jesus’ sinless life was a supplemental aid to his primary mission as the suffering Savior**

a. For Jesus’ death at Calvary to be successful, it was necessary that he be the “spotless Lamb of God” and offer a sinless sacrifice

b. His moral example was simply a natural by-product of his mission, and not his primary motive for resisting the temptation to sin

**3. It is Jesus’ moral life and not his ministry that serves as an example for us to imitate**

a. Jesus’ role as messiah was so unique that it does not lend itself to imitation

b. There are several aspects of Jesus’ messianic ministry that would be inappropriate for us to set up as a universal model

1) His being baptized at age 30

2) His choosing to forego marriage, family, home, and possessions

3) His concentrating his ministry upon the Jews only, and particularly his small group of disciples

4) His teaching with deliberate ambiguity

5) His seeking to suffer and die on a cross

c. To use the life of Jesus indiscriminately as a pattern for Christians is to commit what Dr. Jack Cottrell calls a “Christological fallacy”

d. The key to using Jesus as a role model is to focus upon his moral conduct and the faithful manner in which he performed his unique ministry

***No. 18***

**THE GOSPEL DRAMA**

**Jesus’ Discretion**

**1. Sometimes Jesus instructed those he healed not to tell anyone about what he had done (Mark 1:43-44; 5:43; 7:36)**

a. Many have been puzzled by Jesus’ demand for silence since the key purpose for his miracles is supposed to be to provide evidential support for his divine claims

b. These “messianic mystery” passages in Mark have led some to conclude that Jesus never intended to claim deity

**2. Sometimes Jesus intentionally avoided making direct statements regarding his deity**

a. Jesus apparently preferred the “safe” title “Son of Man” over the more controversial title “Son of God”

1) One of the advantages of the title “Son of Man” is that in Jewish thinking it did not carry the full divine implications of the title “Son of God”

a) The Gospels do not record any blasphemy charges against Jesus for calling himself “Son of Man”

b) There was a legal difference between “Son of Man” and “Son of God” (Luke 22:67-71)

2) Another advantage with the phrase “Son of Man” is that the 3rd person format could not easily be used against Jesus in a court of law

a) It is obvious that Jesus intended to refer to himself when he used the phrase “Son of Man” (John 9:35-37)

b) But the Jewish leaders would have had insufficient legal evidence against Jesus if they did not have a 1st person confession of a claim to deity (i.e., “I am the Son of God”)

b. Jesus’ preference for a safe title over a title that makes a clear statement of deity has led some to conclude that Jesus never intended to claim deity

**3. Some reasons for Jesus’ use of discretion in claiming deity**

a. Jesus apparently did not want demons to testify about him because that would tend to fuel the accusations that he worked in association with demons

1) The Pharisees explained Jesus’ ability to cast out demons by saying that the demons were actually his partners in pulling off a scam before the people (Matt. 12:22-24)

2) Given this context of accusation, if evil demons had then declared that Jesus was Son of God it would tend to look like a set up

3) Thus Jesus commanded demons not to speak about his identity (Mark 1:34; 3:11-12)

b. Jesus apparently took measures to thin out his crowds on occasions when he perceived problems that could interfere with his ministry

1) Sometimes the crowds were so large that they interfered with Jesus’ movement and posed a safety risk

a) A risk for Jesus and his disciples (Mark 3:9-10; Luke 8:42)

b) A risk for the people in the crowds (Luke 12:1)

2) Sometimes the large crowds wanted to use their size to manipulate Jesus into doing what they wanted

a) When a crowd wanted to force Jesus to stay in their area and continue healing (Luke 4:42), he would move on to other areas where he could preach (Mark 1:37-38)

b) When a crowd wanted to force Jesus to set up an earthly kingdom, he retreated from them (John 6:15)

3) Sometimes the crowds would not allow Jesus privacy when he desired it (Mark 7:24)

4) Thus Jesus often chose to avoid areas with large crowds (Mark 1:45)

5) Most of the crowd problems were during the 22 month Galilean ministry, in which Jesus drew his largest crowds

c. Jesus also had to be careful not to get into a situation that might lead to a premature death

1) Both the means and timing of Jesus’ sacrificial death had been established by divine prophecy

2) Thus Jesus would sometimes flee and hide in order to keep God’s plan on track (Matt. 12:14-16; John 8:58-59; 10:39-40)

**4. Jesus’ discretion in claiming deity was necessary when a bold claim would serve to hinder his messianic work**

a. There were many occasions when Jesus instructed those he healed to publicize what he had done (as in Mark 5:19)

b. Thus it is apparent that the occasions of discretion were not intended to deny his deity, but rather to protect his ministry in difficult situations

**Strategic Moves**

**1. Throughout his ministry Jesus had to protect his ministry from being subverted by his enemies**

a. There were always two key dangers for Jesus’ ministry:

1) A death by means other than that which had been determined in advance by God

a) Crucifixion on a cross

b) As proclaimed in prophetic typology (Num. 21:8-9; Deut. 21:22-23)

2) A death prior to the time which had been determined in advance by God

a) The Passover at the end of a 3 ½ year ministry

b) As proclaimed in prophetic word (Dan. 9:26-27)

b. Jesus skillfully managed his ministry in such a way that he was able to carry on his daily work in dangerous circumstances and build up to a crucifixion climax at just the right time

**2. Jesus often avoided a premature arrest and execution by giving cautious answers in dangerous situations**

a. Jesus frequently spoke of himself in the 3rd person using the phrase “the Son of Man”

1) It was obvious to Jesus’ enemies that he was actually making extraordinary claims about himself when he spoke about the Son of Man

2) However, this manner of speaking was not legally precise enough that they could prove that he was making a formal claim to deity and thus bring charges of blasphemy against him

b. Jesus sometimes used a “hit and run” strategy that puzzled and frustrated his enemies

1) The technique:

a) Make a “deity” statement that would bring his enemies to the point of violence

b) Defuse the situation by making a “submission” statement

c) Then just before exiting, make a climatic “deity” statement

2) Illustrated in Jesus’ “I AM” discussion (John 8)

a) He knew that there was the risk of a premature death on this occasion (John 8:37, 40)

b) He gave a cautious answer when his enemies sought incriminating testimony (John 8:25)

c) Then when he was ready to depart, he hit them with “before Abraham was born, I AM” (John 8:58-59)

3) Illustrated in Jesus’ “Son of God” discussion (John 10)

a) He knew that there was the risk of a premature death on this occasion (John 10:31-32)

b) He gave a cautious answer when his enemies sought incriminating testimony (John 10:24-25)

c) Then he hit them with “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30-31)

d) He threw them off balance with another cautious statement (John 10:32-34)

e) Then when he was ready to depart, he hit them with “I am the Son of God” (John 10:35-36, 39)

**3. Jesus sometimes avoided a premature arrest and execution by withdrawing from dangerous areas when the enemy was closing in**

a. Sometimes Jesus fled from Jerusalem so that his enemies could not apprehend him

1) He sought out the safety of the northern province of Galilee (John 7:1) or the non-Jewish territory beyond the Jordan River (John 10:39-40)

2) He hid out in some of the smaller villages of Judea (Matt. 12:14-16; John 11:53-54)

b. During his final week in Jerusalem Jesus retreated each evening to the protection of his friends in Bethany

1) The Jewish leaders had circulated an “arrest warrant” for Jesus during his final week in Jerusalem (John 11:57)

2) During the day Jesus moved about Jerusalem in the safety of large, sympathetic crowds

3) Each evening he sought safe haven a couple of miles away in Bethany (Mark 11:18-19)

a) Saturday evening (John 12:1)

b) Sunday evening (Mark 11:11)

c) Monday evening (Matt. 21:17)

d) Tuesday evening (John 12:36)

**4. Jesus sometimes avoided a premature arrest and execution by moving about in large crowds that had sympathy for him and a distrust of the Jewish leaders**

a. It was the protection of the sympathetic crowd that allowed Jesus teach in the temple each day of his final week without being apprehended by his enemies (Matt. 21:46)

b. It was also the protection of the crowd that forced his enemies to resort to paying the traitor Judas for advance information regarding an occasion when Jesus would not be in a crowd (Matt. 26:14-16)

**5. Jesus carefully orchestrated the events of the evening of his arrest to allow himself the time to accomplish his objectives**

a. Jesus did not allow Judas to know in advance the location of his “last supper”

1) Jesus used a “secret code” to direct Peter and John to the location when he sent them to make preparations (Luke 22:8-13)

2) Thus Judas could not bring in the temple guards for an arrest until after Jesus sent him away from the meal (John 13:27, 30)

b. Jesus did not allow the other apostles to stop Judas from carrying out the betrayal

1) Jesus whispered to John the identity of the traitor (John 13:21-26)

2) Then Jesus whispered to Judas that he knew that Judas was the traitor (Matt. 26:25)

3) Then when he spoke aloud for Judas to exit, he did it in a manner that was not suspicious to the other apostles (John 13:27-29)

c. Jesus positioned himself in a place where he knew Judas and the soldiers could find him

1) Each evening of the final week Jesus took his apostles for a time of prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives (Luke 22:39)

2) When Judas returned to find the upper room empty, he led the soldiers to the place where he naturally assumed Jesus would be praying (John 18:2)

d. When Jesus was finally ready, he went out to meet his enemies (Matt. 26:45-46), and for the first time peacefully surrendered himself to their custody (John 18:4-12)

***No. 19***

**THE SUBSTITUTE ATONEMENT**

**Substitutionary Atonement**

**1. The key problem for mankind is that we have been condemned by God to receive a penalty of eternal suffering**

a. God’s basic rule throughout history:

1) Sin is a willful violation of God’s authority

2) Any sin committed makes a person “guilty” and deserving of punishment by God (Jas. 2:10)

3) God’s designated penalty: “death” (Matt. 25:41; 2 Thess. 1:7-9)

b. Hell is a universal problem

1) Every person who has reached an age of moral responsibility has chosen to sin against God (Rom. 3:23)

2) Thereby resulting in the whole human race being destined to hell

**2. The key problem for God is that he does not desire to inflict hell upon mankind**

a. God’s nature of love and grace prompts him to desire good things for those creatures who bear his image, even when they have done wrong to him (Rom. 5:8)

b. However, God cannot simply “forgive and forget” that which he has promised to punish

1) God’s **holy** nature will not allow him to observe sin and do nothing about it

2) God’s **just** nature will not allow him to back down on his duty to punish sin

3) God’s **faithful** nature will not allow him to go back on his word

c. The “problem” for God is how to do both of the things his nature desires

1) How can he punish sin with his eternal penalty and yet not hurt the sinners?

2) How can he be both “a righteous God” and “our Savior” (Isa. 45:21)?

3) How can he be both “just” and “the justifier” (Rom. 3:26)

**3. The key to both man’s problem and God’s problem is substitutionary atonement**

a. “Atonement” refers to giving whatever penalty is required of you by God for the sin you have done

b. “Substitutionary atonement” refers to allowing someone else to pay your penalty for you

1) Sometimes referred to as “vicarious atonement”

2) Sometimes referred to as “penal substitution”

c. In substitutionary atonement the conflict within God’s nature is fully satisfied

1) God was able to satisfy his just nature and be true to his word in that he did punish sin as he promised

2) At the same time, God was able to satisfy his gracious nature and provide a way for sinners not to suffer God's penalty for sin

d. The essence of Jesus’ death at Calvary is that he was paying the penalty of eternal suffering that sinners owed to God in order to allow mankind to be exempt from suffering

1) Jesus “bore the transgressions and iniquities” of mankind and suffered God’s penalty (Isa. 53:5, 11)

2) Jesus “bore the sins” of mankind and suffered God’s penalty (1 Pet. 2:24)

3) Jesus “became sin” in the place of mankind and suffered God’s penalty (2 Cor. 5:21)

4) Jesus took man’s place under “the curse” of God’s law and suffered God’s penalty (Gal. 3:10-13)

**Fully Human**

**1. It was God’s pleasure to require that the substitutionary atonement for mankind be fully human**

a. Once God announced in prophetic word that salvation would occur by “the seed of woman” (Gen. 3:15), then the incarnation became a necessity for the Son of God if he wanted to save us from our sin

b. God’s human requirement demanded nothing less than **full** humanity (Heb. 2:14, 17)

c. God was apparently operating with the substitution principle of “like for like”

1) Nothing less than human would suffice for a true atonement (Heb. 10:1-4)

2) Even divine nature alone would not satisfy God’s conditions once he announced “seed of woman”

3) By God’s will the substitute must be fully comparable with those whom he intends to save

**2. Jesus fully satisfied the condition that he be human like us**

a. The Biblical testimony confirms that he lived for 33 years on this earth entirely within the parameters of human experience

b. God’s acceptance of his death indicates that he satisfied God’s conditions for substitutionary atonement

**Completely Sinless**

**1. It was God’s pleasure to require that the substitutionary atonement for mankind be completely sinless**

a. Once God announced in prophetic word that salvation would occur by one who was sinless, then a sinless life became a necessity for Jesus if he wanted to save us from our sin

1) Sinlessness was implied in the typology of the Jewish sacrificial lambs, in which no spot or blemish was acceptable (1 Pet. 1:18-19)

2) Sinlessness was declared in the “suffering servant” messianic prophecies in which an innocent man suffers for others (as in Isa. 53:7-9)

b. God’s sinless requirement demanded nothing less than **absolute** sinlessness (Heb. 7:26)

c. God was apparently working with the reasoning that a man with sin could not offer a substitute atonement for someone else because he had his own problems to reckon with

1) In theory, a man could first make atonement for his own sin in hell and then volunteer to suffer for someone else

2) The practical problem with this plan is that there is no time remaining after an eternity in hell

3) The inherent weakness of the Jewish priesthood is that as fallible men the priests had no standing when speaking to God about atonement for the people (Heb. 7:27)

**2. Jesus fully satisfied the condition that he be completely sinless**

a. The Biblical testimony confirms that he lived all of his years on this earth without committing sin

b. God’s acceptance of his death indicates that he satisfied God’s conditions for substitutionary atonement

**Totally Willing**

**1. It was God’s pleasure to require that the substitutionary atonement for mankind be totally willing to suffer God’s wrath**

a. Once God announced in prophetic word that salvation would occur by one who was a willing sacrifice (Psa. 40:6-8; Isa. 53:7), then willing consent became a necessity for Jesus if he wanted to save us from our sin

b. God’s voluntary consent requirement demanded nothing less than **full** consent

1) The plan of redemption was voluntarily accepted by the Son of God prior to the incarnation (Phil. 2:5-8)

2) The plan of redemption was voluntarily accepted by the Son of God throughout the incarnation (John 10:17-18; Heb. 5:8-9; 10:5-10)

c. God was apparently operating with a principle of justice and fairness that would not inflict punishment upon an innocent person who did not agree to accept someone else’s penalty

**2. Jesus fully satisfied the condition that he be a willing sacrifice**

a. The Biblical testimony confirms that at all times Jesus chose to be in submission to God’s scheme of redemption

1) He freely chose to accept the role of suffering messiah at his baptism

2) In Gethsemane he asked about other options for mankind’s redemption instead of Calvary, but with the understanding that he would do whatever God told him was necessary for salvation (Matt. 26:39)

3) He made himself available for arrest at the proper time (Matt. 26:46; John 18:4-8)

4) He retained the option of being rescued by “twelve legions of angels” (Matt. 26:53), but refused to use this privilege

b. God’s acceptance of his death indicates that he satisfied God’s conditions for substitutionary atonement

**Fully Divine**

**1. It was God’s pleasure to require that the substitutionary atonement for mankind be fully divine**

a. Once God announced in prophetic word that salvation would occur by one who possessed a divine nature (as in Isa. 9:6), then deity became a necessity if anyone wished to save the world from sin

b. God’s deity requirement demanded nothing less than **full** deity

1) It is the infinite (eternal) nature of Christ that allows him to maintain our atonement with God forever (Heb. 7:14-16, 23-28)

2) It is the infinite (eternal) nature of Christ that allows him to substitute for all of mankind

**2. Jesus fully satisfied the condition that he be fully divine**

a. The Biblical testimony confirms that within his human body was all the fullness of deity

b. God’s acceptance of his death indicates that he satisfied God’s conditions for substitutionary atonement

***No. 20***

**THE DEATH OF CHRIST**

**The Suffering of Calvary**

**1. The suffering Jesus experienced at Calvary was ultimately inflicted by God**a. The penalty Jesus paid was what we sinners owed to God for violating his authority

b. Thus it was God who “struck” the messiah at Calvary (Isa. 53:4-6, 10)

c. It was God who “delivered” Jesus to Calvary (Rom. 8:32) and used the cruel actions of men to accomplish his atonement purposes (Acts 2:23)

**2. The suffering Jesus experienced at Calvary was equivalent to the suffering of hell**

a. To fully satisfy the just nature of God Jesus would need to suffer no less a penalty than what God had promised mankind

b. On the cross Jesus experienced an equivalent of the **intensity of suffering** that a sinner would encounter in hell

1) Not the **location** of our hell

2) Nor the **duration** of our hell

c. Jesus experienced a “hell” especially suited for his unique identity as “the God-man”

**3. It was God who determined that the cross would be the messianic means for atonement**

a. God could have chosen any means he wished for inflicting the equivalent of hell upon the messiah

b. But once he announced the details of Calvary in prophetic word, the cross became “necessary” for our salvation

1) There was no danger of God announcing a plan that would later prove to be unrealistic and difficult to accomplish

2) God’s foreknowledge devised a plan that he knew would work within the circumstances Jesus would find in 1st century Palestine

**Physical Pain**

**1. Part of the “hell” experience for Jesus was the physical suffering of the crucifixion**

a. Jesus experienced excruciating pain during his crucifixion and the torture that preceded it

b. He was beaten and scourged at least three times

1) His face and body were slapped with open hands and beaten with clenched fists by the Jewish guards after he was convicted of blasphemy (Matt. 26:67-68)

2) His body was beaten and his back flogged by the Roman soldiers in Pilate’s attempt to make Jesus look pitiful enough that the Jewish leaders would consent to release him (John 19:1-3)

3) His back was flogged by the Roman soldiers immediately prior to his crucifixion (Matt. 27:26)

c. His head was pierced with a crown made out of thorns (Matt. 27:29)

d. He was forced to carry the cross beam on his injured back (John 19:17)

e. All of this suffering was experienced while his body was in a weakened state

1) A lack of sleep: he was awake all Thursday night while praying in Gethsemane and throughout the Jewish and Roman trials

2) A lack of food and drink: if he was treated like the typical capital crime criminal, he was not fed or given drink during the trials

3) A loss of blood: the beatings would have resulted in blood loss that would typically not be treated by a doctor (since the ultimate purpose was to kill the criminal)

f. Crucifixion was probably selected by God as the messianic means of suffering because it was the most painful method of execution in the Roman world

**2. The physical suffering of Calvary should have been more intense for Jesus than for all other victims of crucifixion**

a. Physical pain is a radical departure from the eternal experience of deity, because deity never feels even the smallest physical pain

b. Thus the suffering experienced through his human nature should have been immeasurably enlarged for Jesus when the divine nature of his person is also factored into the equation

**3. Jesus understood that he needed to experience the full pain of the crucifixion in order to fulfill his messianic duty**

a. He refused to drink the opiate of wine, gall, and myrrh that he was offered when the nails were hammered into his body (Matt. 27:34; Mark 15:23)

1) The alcohol in the wine would have had a numbing effect upon the pain

2) The “gall” was juice from a poppy (opium) plant that would have also had a numbing effect upon the pain

3) The “myrrh” was a tree resin that would have also had a numbing affect upon the pain

b. The only thing Jesus was willing to drink was the mild wine vinegar (Matt. 27:48)

1) It would relieve the dryness and swelling of his throat enough to allow him to speak from the cross

2) Yet without significantly numbing the pain of the crucifixion

**Humiliation**

**1. Part of the “hell” experience for Jesus was the emotional pain derived from the humiliation of crucifixion**

a. Jesus was declared to be a criminal deserving of the death reserved for the worst sort of criminal

b. He was displayed before the public “naked” and helpless to defend himself

1) The Romans often permitted Jewish prisoners to wear a loincloth as a concession to their religious culture

2) But even then there was a feeling of “nakedness” and shame

c. He was repeatedly mocked and scorned

1) By the Jewish guards after he was convicted of blasphemy (Matt. 26:67-68)

2) By Herod’s soldiers after his trial before Herod (Luke 23:11)

3) By Pilate’s soldiers immediately prior to his crucifixion (Matt. 27:27-31)

4) By the crowd of spectators while Jesus was on the cross (Matt. 27:39-40)

5) By the Jewish leaders while Jesus was on the cross (Matt. 27:41-43)

6) By the Roman soldiers who stood guard while Jesus was on the cross (Luke 23:36-37)

7) By the 2 thieves who were crucified with Jesus (Matt. 27:44)

d. Crucifixion well served God’s plans for messianic suffering because it was designed to add emotional distress to the intense physical trauma

1) The messianic prophecies anticipated the messiah being treated like a criminal (Isa. 53:9, 12)

2) Jesus understood that he must endure the “shame” of the cross in order to accomplish our atonement (Heb. 12:2-3)

**2. The emotional pain of being publicly humiliated should have been more intense for Jesus than for all other victims of crucifixion**

a. The public humiliation of Calvary was a radical departure from the eternal experience of deity, because deity always enjoys an exalted status over all of creation

1) Creatures humble themselves before deity

2) Or face the eternal wrath of deity

b. Thus the humiliation experienced through his human nature should have been immeasurably enlarged for Jesus when the divine nature of his person is also factored into the equation

1) The more exalted a person is, the greater the sting of mockery

2) The mockery given at Calvary was actually inflicted upon an infinite being

**The Wrath of God**

**1. The most significant part of the “hell” experience for Jesus was the emotional and spiritual pain of being the object of God’s wrath**

a. Though it was human hands that tortured Jesus, his thoughts were fixed upon God, the ultimate source of his suffering

1) He was “stricken and smitten of God, and afflicted” (Isa. 53:4)

2) He was “pierced through,” “crushed,” “chastened,” and “scourged” by God (Isa. 53:5)

3) He was “crushed” by God and “put to grief” (Isa. 53:10)

b. The means of torment would have been particularly painful for someone raised in the Jewish culture

1) Mosaic Law declared that a person who is “hanged on a tree” is “accursed by God” (Deut. 21:22-23)

2) Not only could Jesus’ Jewish contemporaries not accept his teaching about a “suffering messiah” but they were scandalized by the idea of a “crucified messiah” (1 Cor. 1:23)

3) Even his disciples could not reconcile their faith in Jesus with his being crucified (Luke 24:20-21)

4) And yet Jesus fulfilled the typology of Moses’ “hanging” law and came under God’s curse while on the cross (Gal. 3:13)

5) Thus during the entire period that Jesus hung on the cross he had a forceful and constant reminder that he was being cursed by the wrath of God

c. The experience of being alienated from God the Father would have been a “death” in the truest sense of the word

1) The basic idea of death is not non-existence, but separation from God and the life he gives (as illustrated in Luke 15:24)

2) The “death” God promised in hell is more than just physical and emotional suffering, but the anguish of being separated from God for eternity (2 Thess. 1:9)

3) At Calvary Jesus experienced the death of being “forsaken” by God (Matt. 27:46)

**2. The emotional pain of being the object of God’s wrath should have been more intense for Jesus than for anyone else who has ever lived**

a. Our human experience cannot even begin to imagine what it would feel like for the Son of God to experience the divine wrath reserved for sinners

1) For one who is perfectly holy to be punished like a sinner

2) For one who has enjoyed perfect harmony within the Trinity to have that relationship torn apart

b. The intense agony Jesus experienced is reflected in his cry “my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46)

1) Jesus would have been reflecting upon the whole of Psalm 22, a messianic prophecy of the suffering messiah

2) The story is of a righteous man who expresses his bewilderment and anguish at having his cries for mercy be ignored by God

1 My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning. 2 O my God, I cry by day, but You do not answer; And by night, but I have no rest.

4 In You our fathers trusted; They trusted and You delivered them. 5 To You they cried out and were delivered; In You they trusted and were not disappointed. 6 But I am a worm and not a man, A reproach of men and despised by the people. 7 All who see me sneer at me; They separate with the lip, they wag the head, saying, 8 “Commit yourself to the LORD; let Him deliver him; Let Him rescue him, because He delights in him.”

14 I am poured out like water, And all my bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It is melted within me. 15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And my tongue cleaves to my jaws; And You lay me in the dust of death. 16 For dogs have surrounded me; A band of evildoers has encompassed me; They pierced my hands and my feet. 17 I can count all my bones. They look, they stare at me; 18 They divide my garments among them, And for my clothing they cast lots. 19 But You, O LORD, be not far off; O You my help, hasten to my assistance.

c. Thus the alienation from God experienced through his human nature should have been immeasurably enlarged for Jesus when the divine nature of his person is also factored into the equation

“As the sin-offering for His people He [Christ] was treated as if He were sinful in His own person. The Father’s presence, of which He had been so conscious throughout his entire life, was now withdrawn, as was also the light of the sun. His sensitive soul was left to suffer alone and in violent conflict with the forces of evil which sought desperately on this last occasion to cause His downfall and defeat His redemptive work. The anguished cry, ‘My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?’ is an indication of the extremity of His suffering.”

Loraine Boettner, *Studies in Theology* (1947), p. 190

**Atonement Accomplished**

**1. Atonement for our sin was fully accomplished in the six hours Jesus suffered on the cross**

a. Jesus did not need to die and go to hell in order to make atonement for our sins

b. Jesus anticipated that his obedient suffering on the cross would be rewarded by admission into “paradise” that same day (Luke 23:43)

c. Near the end of his suffering Jesus spoke as if the wrath of God were over

1) Moving from his earlier cry of “my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46)

2) To the peaceful words of “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit” (Luke 23:46)

d. At the end of his suffering Jesus declared “it is finished” (John 19:30)

e. At the moment of his death God ripped the temple veil from top to bottom (Matt. 27:50-51), indicating that atonement was completed and that access to God the Father was now available to sinners (Heb. 10:19-20)

**2. The key to the atonement penalty was the suffering on the cross, not the experience of being buried in the tomb for three days**

***No. 21***

**IMAGES OF CALVARY**

**Sacrifice**

**1. The imagery of Calvary as a sacrifice derives from an Old Testament Jewish background**

a. The blood sacrifices of Mosaic Law are the obvious parallel to Jesus’ death because they involve the death of the thing being sacrificed

1) The regular sin offering

2) The regular guilt (trespass) offering

3) The special Passover sacrifice

4) The special Day of Atonement sacrifice

b. The sacrifices that involved no “shedding blood” are not relevant to a discussion of Calvary

**2. The Old Testament sacrifice ritual was designed by God to symbolize the atonement of Christ at the cross**

a. A sinner delivered an unblemished animal to a priest at the tabernacle/temple

b. The sinner placed his hands upon the head of the animal in order to symbolize the transferring of his guilt to the animal (Lev. 16:20-22)

c. The priest killed the animal by slitting its throat with a knife

d. The priest sprinkled or poured the animal’s blood upon some of the sanctuary furniture in order to symbolize the presentation of the sacrifice to God himself

e. The sinner returned home unharmed, symbolizing a successful substitution

f. However, the sinner regularly returned to offer further sacrifices, symbolizing the need for something more effective than animal sacrifices

**3. The New Testament often applies the imagery of sacrifice to Calvary**

a. The unblemished animal symbolizes the sinlessness of Jesus (Heb. 9:13-14; 1 Pet. 1:19)

b. The transferring of guilt to the animal symbolizes the idea of Jesus bearing the sins of the world (Isa. 53:4-6; 1 Pet. 2:24)

c. The animal being killed by the priest’s knife symbolizes Jesus being afflicted by the wrath of God (Isa. 53:4-7, 10)

d. The tearing of the temple veil from top to bottom at the moment Jesus died (Matt. 27:51) symbolizes that Jesus has now obtained access for sinners into the presence of God

1) The curtain separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place symbolizes the separation between sinners and God (Heb. 9:6-9)

2) Calvary marked the occasion for the removal of all barriers between sinners and the company of God (Heb. 10:19-20)

e. While the daily sacrifices of the priest symbolizes the ineffectiveness of animal sacrifices, Jesus sitting down on the throne of God after ascending to heaven symbolizes the completion of his work of atonement (Heb. 10:10-12)

**4. The idea of substitution can be seen in the imagery of the knife being used on an animal rather than upon the sinner himself**

a. God’s justice is satisfied in that a death has occurred as prescribed

b. God’s grace is satisfied in that his people have been spared from suffering his wrath

**Redemption**

**1. The imagery of Calvary as a redemption derives from an Old Testament Jewish background**

a. “Redemption” refers to arranging for the release of a person or property from someone’s possession by paying that person the price he demands

1) The “ransom” is the price that is demanded for the release to take place

2) The “redeemer” is the one who pays the ransom price

b. Mosaic Law established the formal “redemption” of a firstborn son or animal from God’s prior claim

1) After the 10th plague in Egypt, God established among the Israelites an automatic claim upon all of their firstborn sons and male animals

2) The rule for a firstborn son was to redeem him with the payment of a set price to the priesthood (Exod. 13: 11-15; Num. 18:15-17)

c. Mosaic Law established the formal “redemption” of a relative from slavery or of family property from another person’s ownership

1) A Jew who sold himself and/or his property to pay debts could be redeemed by a “near kinsman” willing to pay the required ransom price (Lev. 25:23-27, 47-54)

2) This was the setting in which Ruth and the property of her deceased husband were redeemed by Boaz (Ruth 3:11-13; 4:3-10)

**2. The New Testament often applies the imagery of redemption to Calvary**

a. The idea of a person or property being held under someone else’s claim symbolizes the sinner’s bondage to serve out the penalty he owes to God’s law (Gal. 3:13; 4:5)

b. The idea of paying a ransom price symbolizes Jesus paying God’s required ransom price of eternal suffering (Matt. 20:28; Eph. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:18-19)

c. The “costly” ransom price symbolizes the great cost to Jesus to set us free from God’s curse: his own death (1 Tim. 2:6; Rev. 5:9)

d. It is inappropriate to refer to Jesus paying a ransom price to Satan, since it was God’s law that held sinners in bondage

**3. The idea of substitution can be seen in the imagery of a person’s freedom being secured by someone else paying his ransom price for him**

a. God’s justice is satisfied in that his violated law has made someone pay

b. God’s grace is satisfied in that his people have been released from their captivity and suffering

**Reconciliation**

**1. The imagery of Calvary as a reconciliation derives from a cultural background common to both Jew and Greek**

a. “Reconciliation” refers to resolving the differences between two disputing parties by the use of a third party mediator

b. The mediator listens to the testimony of both sides and then determines where fault lies

c. The mediator establishes what conditions must be met by either party in order for friendly relations to resume

d. Peace is restored when both parties in the dispute agree to the conditions

**2. The New Testament often applies the imagery of reconciliation to Calvary**

a. The idea of two parties being enemies until their differences are settled symbolizes the radical separation that existed between God and sinners until Jesus accomplished a reconciliation (Rom. 5:10-11; Eph. 2:16; Col. 1:20-22)

b. The use of a mediator to settle differences symbolizes Jesus’ role as the one who works to bring God and man back into a peaceful relationship again

c. The establishment a conditions for reconciliation symbolizes Jesus declaring that God’s wrath is appropriate for man’s sin

d. The idea that peace can not resume until both sides agree to the conditions for reconciliation symbolizes the idea that the hold out for peace between God and man is for man to come to terms with his requirements and accept Jesus’ offer to pay for him

1) God has already been reconciled to mankind at Calvary

2) Now the gospel message is that sinners will choose to be reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:18-20)

**3. Christ gives a unique twist to the common practice of reconciliation by offering to satisfy the terms of reconciliation himself**

**4. The idea of substitution can be seen in the imagery of our mediator Jesus offering to satisfy the conditions of reconciliation for us**

a. God’s justice is satisfied in that his honor was upheld by the mediator (he was declared to be in the right) and the appropriate conditions are satisfied

b. God’s grace is satisfied in that his people have been spared the hardship of the conditions set by the mediator

**Propitiation**

**1. The imagery of Calvary as a propitiation derives largely from a Greek pagan background**

a. “Propitiation” refers to turning away divine wrath by putting forth another object to be consumed

1) The appearance of natural calamities suggests that a god is angry with the people and is prepared to send even greater manifestations of wrath

2) A gift is offered to the angry god for him to consume with his anger

3) By offering the gift, the wrath of the god is drawn away from the people

b. Though 1st century Greeks had largely abandoned a belief in the literal reality of their religious mythology, they still retained the imagery and terminology

c. Thus the church could use the old imagery of propitiation, with a certain amount of modification

1) The Old Testament contains traces of the concept of propitiation

2) For example, the top of the Ark of the Covenant was referred to as the “propitiation seat” because it was the key place where the high priest attempted to appease the wrath of God with the sprinkling of blood

3) However, propitiation was a minor theme in Old Testament Judaism

**2. The New Testament occasionally applies the imagery of propitiation to Calvary**

a. The idea of nature producing manifestations of divine wrath symbolizes God’s verbal revelation of his wrath against sinners as well as his temporal acts of judgment

b. The gift drawing divine wrath away from people symbolizes Jesus drawing God’s wrath away from sinners at Calvary (1 John 2:2)

**3. The significant modification in the New Testament version of propitiation is the controlled anger of God at Calvary**

a. In the pagan imagery, people offer a propitiation gift to a god who is filled with rage and who is capricious and irrational enough to direct his wrath toward the first available object

b. In the Christian version, it is God himself who offers Jesus as the propitiation gift for his righteous anger, and sinners are the ones whose actions tend to be capricious and irrational (Rom. 3:25; 1 John 4:10)

c. Modern theology generally dismisses the concept of propitiation because they fail to take into account the New Testament modification of the imagery

1) Many argue that the Greek word for propitiation, *hilasmos*, must mean something other than pagan propitiation or the New Testament writers would not have used the term

2) The alternate translation for *hilasmos* is typically “expiation”, which refers to the erasing of someone’s debt in a record book

3) However, a study of Greek literature confirms that *hilasmos* can not be disassociated from the concept of divine wrath

**4. The idea of substitution can be seen in the imagery of a gift being used to draw God’s wrath away from us**

a. God’s justice is satisfied in that his wrath is poured out upon someone

b. God’s grace is satisfied in that his people have been spared the brunt of his wrath

***No. 22***

**ERRONEOUS IDEAS**

**REGARDING CHRIST’S DEATH**

**Ransom From Satan**

**1. Some have erroneously maintained that Christ’s death was a redemption of sinners from bondage to Satan**

a. The “ransom from Satan” story:

1) Sinners were in bondage to Satan (and sin and death)

2) Satan offered to release man in exchange for Jesus’ death (which would put him under Satan’s control for eternity)

3) Jesus’ death was a ransom payment made to Satan

b. Some add the idea that following the release of the hostages Jesus tricked Satan by breaking free from his hold as he arose from the grave

c. Notable proponents

1) Origen (3rd century)

2) Gregory of Nyssa (4th century)

**2. The “ransom from Satan” theory misses the Biblical emphasis upon God’s wrath at Calvary**

a. It was the curse of God’s Law that held sinners in bondage and placed them in need of redemption (Gal. 3:13; 4:5)

b. The focus of Calvary is upon God’s wrath (Isa. 53:4-6) and not the Devil’s mischief

**The Moral Influence Theory**

**1. The Moral Influence theory erroneously maintains that the primary purpose of Jesus’ death was to serve as a symbol of God’s love**

a. The key to understanding Calvary is not wrath, but love

1) God was demonstrating how much he loves mankind

2) And hoping to stir up within the hearts of men a similar love for God

3) When a man responds with this kind of love toward God, then God will forgive his sins on the basis of that love

b. Notable proponents

1) Peter Abelard (12th century)

2) Horace Bushnell (19th century)

**2. The Moral Influence theory misses the Biblical emphasis upon God’s wrath at Calvary**

a. It is impossible to remove God’s wrath from an honest reading of the Biblical text (Isa. 53:4-6)

b. It is true that Calvary does express the love of God, but love can only be seen if there is a wrath from which we are being saved by Christ

c. The problem with the moral influence theory is not the idea that Calvary expresses the love of God, but the exclusion of the concepts of wrath and substitutionary atonement

**The Governmental Theory**

**1. The Governmental theory erroneously maintains that the primary purpose of Jesus’ death was to serve as a threat of God’s wrath**

a. Jesus’ death was intended by God to be an object lesson of warning for mankind

1) God was illustrating how serious it is to violate his Law (“government”)

2) And hoping that a severe punishment upon Christ would instill a respectful fear within the hearts of mankind and then act as a deterrent against sin

3) When a man responds with this kind of respect toward God, then God will forgive his sins on the basis of that attitude

b. Notable proponents

1) Grotius (17th century)

2) Wesleyan Arminianism (18th century)

**2. The Governmental theory misses the Biblical emphasis upon Christ’s death actually paying a penalty in our stead**

a. Unlike the previous theories, the wrath of God is recognized by the Governmental theory

b. However, the theory still falls short of the fuller picture in substitutionary atonement

1) In which Christ does not simply face a suffering **similar** to what sinners could face in hell, but actually suffers our hell penalty for us (Isa. 53:4-6; 1 Pet. 2:24)

2) And pays a price that actually redeems us from the penalty of God’s Law (Gal. 3:13; Rev. 5:9)

c. The problem with the governmental theory is not the idea that Calvary promotes a respect for God and his will, but the exclusion of the concept of substitutionary atonement

**Atonement for Sickness**

**1. Some have erroneously maintained that Christ’s death was a redemption from physical sickness and disease as well as from the guilt of sin**

a. The alternate reading of Isaiah 53:4 says that the “suffering messiah” took upon himself our “infirmities”

1) Typical translation: “Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried” (NASB)

2) Alternate translation: “Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows” (NIV)

b. The theory maintains that Calvary addresses not only sin’s affliction to the soul, but the affliction to our physical bodies

c. A Christian who fully believes in the healing power of Calvary can claim victory over their physical afflictions

**2. The atonement for sickness theory misses the Biblical emphasis upon Christ’s resurrection as the source of victory over physical afflictions**

a. It is the guilt of sin for which we receive condemnation to hell and need atonement

b. Sickness, disease, physical frailties, and death are remedied by the power of the resurrection of Christ

1) Sickness and disease are not guilt problems for which “atonement” can be made

2) The life-giving power displayed at the empty tomb is the key to the “redemption of the body” at our day of resurrection (Rom. 8:11, 18-23)

**Limited Atonement**

**1. Calvinism erroneously maintains that Christ’s death was only intended for a limited number of people predestined for salvation**

a. God has predetermined before creation to whom he will grant the faith necessary for salvation

b. Jesus only died for those whom God predestined for salvation

1) Jesus had the power to die for an infinite number of people

2) But the issue is logical consistency within the Scheme of Redemption

3) It makes no sense for Jesus to die for people God never intended to save

c. Arguments for Limited Atonement

1) The Bible speaks of Jesus dying for “many” (Mark 10:45; Rom. 5:19; Heb. 9:28), which implies that he did not die for everyone

2) The Bible speaks of Jesus dying for the saints (John 10:15; Eph. 5:25; Tit. 2:14), which implies that he did not die for everyone

**2. The Limited Atonement theory misses the Biblical emphasis upon Christ dying for all sinners**

a. The New Testament affirms that Jesus’ death has relevance to all of mankind (1 Tim. 2:6; Heb. 2:9; 1 John 2:2)

b. God’s offer of salvation to all sinners (Mark 16:16; John 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:4) implies that Jesus’ death can be claimed by anyone

c. A “statement of inclusion” does not necessarily imply exclusion

1) To say that Jesus died for the saints does not necessarily imply that he died for **only** the saints

a) For example, Jesus died for “us” (Tit. 2:14)

b) And yet, his salvation is for all (Tit. 2:11)

2) Jesus’ death for “many” does not necessarily exclude a death for “all”

a) The Biblical contrast is not “many” vs. “all”

b) But “many” vs. “one” (Rom. 5:19; Heb. 9:28)

c) Christ’s death goes at least as far as the curse of sin (Rom. 5:18-19)

d. The only limitation upon the extent of Jesus’ atonement is the failure of some to take advantage of this “Savior of all men” (1 Tim. 4:10)

**Jesus’ Descent Into Hell**

**1. Some erroneously maintain that Jesus descended into hell during the period between his death and resurrection**

a. Some suggest that Jesus went to hell in order to experience the suffering that atonement required (citing Acts 2:27)

b. Some suggest that Jesus went to hell to preach to those who had died prior to Calvary so that they might have an opportunity to accept salvation (citing 1 Pet. 3:18-20)

c. Some suggest that Jesus went to “hell” in the sense that he went to the place where all of the dead were kept prior to Calvary and there gathered the Old Testament saints and led them to heaven (citing Eph. 4:8-9)

d. A key stimulus for this idea is the Apostles’ Creed:

“I believe . . . in Jesus Christ, His [God’s] only Son, our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. He descended to hell, on the third day rose again from the dead . . . .”

**2. The descent into hell theory misses the Biblical emphasis upon atonement accomplished on the cross**

a. Jesus anticipated being in paradise on the day he died (Luke 23:43), not hell

b. The Greek text of Acts 2:27 refers to Jesus’ soul in *hades* the “grave” rather than in *gehenna* “hell”

c. Jesus’ preaching in 1 Peter 3:18-20 is the Holy Spirit’s preaching through Noah prior to the flood

1) The “Spirit of Christ” inspired all of the Old Testament prophets (1 Pet. 1:11)

2) Noah was a “preacher of righteousness” to his generation (2 Pet. 2:5)

3) When Noah preached to the “spirits” of his day who are “now in prison” it was the Spirit of Christ actually speaking to them through Noah, and only 8 responded to the offer of salvation

d. Jesus’ “descent” in Ephesians 4:8-9 is his incarnation on earth, while his “ascent” with captives is a victory parade with his defeated enemy at his death and resurrection

e. If the Apostles’ Creed is still to be used today, the “descent into hell” line should be removed

**Modern Christology**

**1. The anti-supernatural bias of modern theology typically results in a denial of the concepts of divine wrath and substitutionary atonement**

“It is impossible to get rid of the idea of substitution or of vicarious punishment from any faithful representation of St. Paul’s doctrine. . . But we are in no way bound to accept Paul’s interpretation of Christ’s death. I dismiss from my mind all ideas of substitution, or of the innocent paying the penalty of the guilty because these ideas offend my moral consciousness.”

Vernon Storrs, quoted in *Baker’s Dictionary of Theology*, p. 75

“I conclude, therefore, by saying that to a superficial view there is much in Holy Scripture that might naturally be held to point out the sacrifice of Christ as actually expiating and atoning for the guilt of sin, and as really appeasing God and propitiating him to the sinner. Nor is there any likelihood that this view will be speedily abandoned. It pervades all our best commentaries, and most venerable creeds; all our most valuable and wholesome religious literature. It breathes in our songs of praise and thanksgiving, and expresses itself in our humble prayers and adoring worship. It enters into the most sacred feelings of pious souls. The best thoughts of the world, the best hearts, the best men, are subject to it. It is cherished as a sacred, precious, vital truth. It cannot be, it ought not to be given up, save as the tree gives up its older bark, in obedience to the growing influence of a greener, a fresher, and a better. . . . But the time will come, I doubt not, when this view will be greatly modified.”

J. S. Lamar, *The New Testament Commentary on Luke*, pp. 299-300

**2. The better we comprehend the Biblical doctrine of God and the doctrine of sin, the more we will appreciate the idea of substitutionary atonement**

“All inadequate doctrines of the atonement are due to inadequate doctrines of God and man. If we bring God down to our level and raise ourselves to his, then of course we see no need for a radical salvation, let alone for a radical atonement to secure it. When, on the other hand, we have glimpsed the blinding glory of the holiness of God, and have been so convicted of our sin by the Holy Spirit that we tremble before God and acknowledge what we are, namely ‘hell-deserving sinners’, then and only then does the necessity of the cross appear so obvious that we are astonished we never saw it before.”

John Stott, *Cross of Christ* (1986), p. 109

**No. 23**

**JESUS’ RESURRECTION**

**The Resurrection Event**

**1. Jesus’ resurrection occurred on the Sunday immediately following his death at Calvary**

. The New Testament does not identify the moment when Jesus arose from the dead, but rather, it refers to the tomb being discovered empty on Sunday, “the first day of the week” (Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:2; Luke 24:1; John 20:1)

b. His resurrection most likely occurred near dawn on Sunday at the moment of the great earthquake (Matt. 28:2)

**2. Jesus’ resurrection is spoken of as having occurred on “the third day” following his crucifixion**

a. Jesus died on a Passover Friday sometime around 3:00 p.m.

1) Just before the beginning of the Sabbath day (Luke 23:54)

2) The “ninth hour” of the day (Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34; Luke 23:44)

b. His Sunday resurrection is spoken of as a “third day” resurrection (Luke 24:21; 1 Cor. 15:4)

c. The New Testament is obviously rounding off the days to get three days:

1) Friday (the crucifixion and a death at mid-afternoon)

2) Saturday (a full day in the tomb)

3) Sunday (a night in the tomb and then an early morning resurrection)

d. It is not necessary to propose a Thursday crucifixion in order to bring the count closer to 72 hours in the tomb

**3. Jesus’ resurrection was distinct from all other resurrections that have ever occurred in Biblical history**

a. Jesus was the first and only person thus far to be raised to “immortality,” that is, to never die again (Acts 13:34-37; Rom. 6:9; Rev. 1:17-18)

b. Though we will one day imitate his resurrection, he retains the status of being “the firstfruits from the dead” (1 Cor. 15:20)

**4. The Holy Spirit raised Jesus from the dead by the authority of God the Father**

a. God is credited as being the ultimate source of Jesus’ resurrection (Acts 2:24, 32; 3:15, 26; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30, 33-34; 17:31; Rom. 4:24; 7:4; 10:9; 1 Cor. 6:14; 15:15; 2 Cor. 4:14; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:20; Col. 2:12; 1 Thess. 1:10; 1 Pet. 1:21)

b. The Holy Spirit was the active agent of the resurrection (Rom. 1:4)

1) In the Scheme of Redemption, the Holy Spirit seems to be the one who actually applies life and power to individuals

2) It is the Holy Spirit who applies regeneration to our lives after the pattern of the resurrection of Jesus’ body (Rom. 8:9-14)

3) It is the Holy Spirit who equips select individuals with supernatural gifts (1 Cor. 12:11)

c. Jesus’ reference to “raising himself” from the grave (John 2:19-21) is best understood as him asking God to resurrect him and his plea being accepted by God (Heb. 5:7)

**Jesus’ Resurrection Appearances**

**1. Following his resurrection Jesus made a number of visits to disciples and relatives**

a. Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9-11; John 20:11-18)

b. The other women from Galilee (Matt. 28:9-10)

c. The 2 men from Emmaus (Mark 16:12-13; Luke 24:13-35)

d. Peter (Luke 24:35)

e. The apostles minus Thomas (Mark 16:14; Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-25)

f. The apostles with Thomas (John 20:26-31)

g. 7 of the apostles by the Sea of Galilee (John 21:1-25)

h. The apostles on a mountain in Galilee (Matt. 28:16-20) and 500 disciples (1 Cor. 15:6)

i. Jesus’ brother James (1 Cor. 15:7)

j. The apostles at the ascension (Mark 16:15-20; Luke 24:44-53; Acts 1:9-11)

**2. Jesus’ resurrection appearances began on resurrection Sunday and continued for the next 40 days (Acts 1:3)**

a. After the 40 day period there are only 3 other occasions recorded in the New Testament in which someone witnessed the resurrected Christ

1) Stephen as he was being stoned to death (Acts 7:56)

2) Paul during his conversion on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:4-6)

3) The apostle John when he received the visions of the book of Revelation (Rev. 1:12-20)

b. At the end of the 40 day period of resurrection appearances, Jesus ascended to heaven (Acts 1:3, 9)

**Jesus’ Resurrection Body**

**1. The resurrection body of Jesus was the same physical body that had been nailed to the cross, though restored to full strength**

a. His resurrection body could be touched

1) Jesus challenged his disciples to touch his body so that they would have evidence that he was not a spiritual apparition (Luke 24:39-40)

2) The women who discovered the empty tomb touched the feet of Jesus (Matt. 28:9)

3) Mary was instructed not to cling to Jesus while she still had a message to deliver for him (John 20:17)

b. His resurrection body could eat food (Luke 24:41-43)

1) This does not necessarily imply that he needed to eat and drink in order to live

2) His eating on this occasion appears to have had an apologetic purpose

c. His resurrection body bore the physical marks of the crucifixion (Luke 24:39; John 20:27)

d. His resurrection body could enter a locked room (John 20:19, 26) or disappear from sight (Luke 24:31) by the same miraculous power with which he walked on water (John 6:19), and not because it was a spiritual body

**2. Jesus’ resurrection body experienced the first of two stages in heavenly glorification**

a. Stage one: resurrection of a dead body back to life

b. Stage two: transformation of a resurrected body to a spiritual condition suited for heaven (1 Cor. 15:42-44, 51-53; Phil. 3:21)

c. The “Murray Harris-Norman Geisler Debate” derives from Harris’ confusion regarding the timing of the two stages of glorification, as he proposes that the spiritual transformation occurred at the moment Jesus’ body came out of the tomb

d. The return of Christ will involve a “visible return” (Matt. 24:30; Rev. 1:7), though not necessarily a physical or bodily return

**3. Jesus’ resurrection body still retained the recognizable features of the incarnation**

a. Jesus could apparently be recognized when he greeted the women who met him at the empty tomb (Matt. 28:9)

b. The reason the two disciples from Emmaus did not recognize Jesus was because they were supernaturally prevented from doing so until he was ready to reveal himself (Luke 24:16, 31)

c. The reason the apostles fishing on the Sea of Galilee did not recognize Jesus was because of dim lighting (John 21:4) and distance (John 21:8)

d. The reason Mary thought that Jesus was a gardener was because she did not “turn” and look into his face until she heard him say her name (John 20:16-17)

**4. There is no necessity for the Son of God to retain his incarnation/resurrection body in any form after the completion of the Scheme of Redemption**

a. After the “consummation” of all things into their eternal states, the Son of God may retire from his incarnation role and resume his natural, ontological state (1 Cor. 15:24-28)

b. Our focus for eternity will likely be upon “God the three in one” rather than simply upon Jesus Christ

***No. 24***

**THE ULTIMATE VICTORY**

**A Vindication by God**

**1. The resurrection served as a divine confirmation for the person and work of Christ**

a. Jesus staked his claims upon one key miracle: a third day resurrection (Matt. 12:38-40; 27:63; John 2:19-22)

b. The resurrection confirmed Jesus’ claims regarding his divine identity (Acts 17:31; Rom. 1:4)

c. The resurrection confirmed Jesus’ claim that his death would accomplish atonement for sin (Rom. 4:25; 1 Cor. 15:14-20)

d. The resurrection of Jesus can serve as a foundation for Christian apologetics

1) Make a case for “the empty tomb” and you give credence to the theological teaching of Jesus

2) Dr. Jack Cottrell proposes as a basic apologetics outline:

a) What proves the resurrection?

b) What does the resurrection prove?

**2. The key to the validation effect of the resurrection is its occurrence on “the third day”**

a. Several times in his ministry Jesus prophesied that he would be resurrected on “the third day” (Matt. 12:38-40; 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:18-19; John 2:19-22)

b. Scripture does not indicate why Jesus used the number three

1) It was probably God’s design to delay the resurrection long enough so that everyone would be satisfied that Jesus was dead before he claimed a resurrection

2) The Holy Spirit may have revealed the number three to Jesus after he was filled with the Spirit at his baptism

3) Jesus may have decided upon the “third day” idea based upon Old Testament precedents

a) The Jewish peace offering had to be eaten within two days, and could not be eaten on “the third day” without “offending” God (Lev. 7:17-18; 19:6-7)

b) God is said to bring relief from his wrath on “the third day” (Hos. 6:1-2)

c) Jonah prefigured the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus (Matt. 12:38-40) when he was released from the belly of the fish after three days (Jonah 1:17)

c. Once Jesus announced a “third day resurrection” then only a resurrection on Sunday would provide divine confirmation for his messianic claims

**A Victory over Satan**

**1. As he approached Calvary, Jesus anticipated a confrontation with the Devil**

a. On the evening prior to his crucifixion, Jesus told his apostles that he was about to enter into a conflict with Satan (John 14:30)

b. There is a sense in which Satan’s attack began with the suffering on the cross (Gen. 3:15), but the real struggle with Satan occurred in the realm of death

1) Calvary is best understood as **God’s** punishment of Jesus

2) Satan is at best a secondary player

**2. Satan’s final strategy for defeating the messianic mission of Christ was to prevent a “third day resurrection”**

a. Satan’s original plan must have been to try to prevent Jesus from reaching the cross and thereby fulfilling the suffering messiah prophecies

1) Satan probably inspired the various attempts on Jesus’ life throughout the incarnation

a) It is reasonable to assume that if Jesus had died in any other manner than the way God prophesied (“on a tree”), then the credibility of his atonement claims would be undermined

b) Satan was probably working through King Herod when he attempted to kill Jesus as a baby (Matt. 2:16)

c) Satan was probably working through the various people who attempted to kill Jesus earlier in his ministry by means other than crucifixion (Luke 4:29; John 8:59; 10:31)

d) Satan was probably working through Jesus’ friends who attempted to persuade him not to risk his life in Jerusalem (Matt. 16:21-23)

e) In fact Satan was probably involved in all of the occasions in Old Testament history when the continuity of the messianic line was threatened (such as in the Egyptian bondage and in the various military assaults upon the Jews)

2) Satan was apparently limited by God in the actions he could take against Jesus

a) All of the life-threatening activity against Jesus that is recorded in the New Testament show Satan working through normal human means

b) It is likely that Satan was not permitted to use his demonic forces either to kill Jesus or to reveal his location to those who were seeking his death

c) Apparently Satan could inspire men with the motivation to kill Jesus (John 13:27), but he could not provide them any supernatural assistance

b. Satan’s final plan for defeating Christ appears to have been a “third day offensive”

1) At some point Satan conceded that he could not stop Jesus from reaching Calvary, and thus worked through Judas to bring about the death at the cross (John 13:27)

2) It would not be necessary to hold Jesus’ body in the tomb forever, but just until the fourth day

3) A resurrection on any other day than the third day would lose the divine validation Jesus promised

4) Thus the Devil may have marshaled all of his demonic force on Sunday to guard the body in the tomb and prevent a resurrection that day

**3. By the power of Holy Spirit Jesus was raised on the third day in vindication and victory**

a. The resurrection of Jesus demonstrated that he represents a heavenly power much stronger than that of Satan and death (Rom. 6:9; 2 Tim. 1:10; Rev. 1:17-18)

b. By his resurrection Jesus delivered a crushing and humiliating defeat to Satan (Gen. 3:15; Col. 2:15; Heb. 2:14) and sealed his doom in the eschatological confrontation to come (Rev. 20:10)

***No. 25***

**JESUS’ ASCENSION**

**Coronation as Our Lord**

**1. The ascension of Jesus marks the occasion of his official appointment as Lord and King of creation**

a. As Jesus ascended from earth he was given a royal reception in heaven

1) He was seated upon God’s throne (Mark 16:19; Heb. 1:3)

2) He was given authority over all creation (Eph. 1:20-22; 1 Pet. 3:21-22)

3) He was given the title *kurios* or Lord (Acts 2:32-36; 5:30-31; Phil. 2:9-11)

b. Jesus’ heavenly exaltation was in response to his faithful ministry as messiah and his willingness to suffer at Calvary (Phil. 2:5-9)

c. During his resurrection appearances Jesus could already consider himself Lord, as he anticipated the official pronouncement to be given in heaven (Matt. 28:18)

1) At his death, he earned the position of Lord

2) At his resurrection, he claimed the position of Lord

3) At his ascension, he was officially appointed as Lord

**2. As a result of Jesus’ resurrection and ascension, the “good confession” of the church is “Jesus is Lord”**

a. The confession spoken by Jesus himself (1 Tim. 6:12-15 and John 18:37)

b. The confession first declared during his resurrection appearances (John 20:28)

c. The confession required for salvation (Rom. 10:9)

d. The confession that distinguishes the genuine Christian (1 Cor. 12:3; 1 Pet. 3:15)

**3. At the second coming of Christ, the Lordship begun at the ascension will be brought to its complete fullness**

a. At this time his Lordship is voluntarily acknowledged by the church (Psa. 110:3)

b. At the Judgment his Lordship will be reluctantly acknowledged by even his enemies (Psa. 110:1-2; Isa. 45:23)

**Promise of the Holy Spirit**

**1. Following his ascension to heaven Jesus fulfilled the promise that he would send the Holy Spirit**

a. The Old Testament prophets predicted that the messiah would inaugurate a sanctification ministry by the Holy Spirit (Ezek. 36:24-27; Joel 2:28-29)

b. Jesus promised during his ministry that the sanctification of the Holy Spirit would begin after his ascension and glorification (John 7:38-39)

c. As he prepared to leave the earth Jesus announced that the promise of the Holy Spirit would be fulfilled very soon (Acts 1:4-8)

d. The age-old promise of the “gift of the Holy Spirit” was finally fulfilled ten days after Jesus’ ascension (Acts 1:3; 2:1), on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4, 15-18, 33, 38-39)

**2. The sanctification ministry of the Holy Spirit is a new experience for believers, not previously available to the Old Testament saints**

a. The Holy Spirit’s work prior to Pentecost was primarily that of equipping select persons with special abilities for service

1) With gifts of revelation and inspiration

2) With the ability to perform miraculous feats

3) With the ability to perform jobs with skill and wisdom

b. Because Israel did not have the advantage of the sanctifying ministry of the Holy Spirit, they had to pursue a holy lifestyle through other means

1) The guidance and encouragement of Scripture and fellow believers

2) A complete segregation from pagan influences

a) Thus Joshua was instructed to remove all Canaanites from the promised land

b) Thus the Jews were forbidden to have intimate dealings with pagans, and especially not to marry them

c) Thus the Jews were not given a “Great Commission” to evangelize the nations, but a promise that when messiah comes, then the name of Jehovah would be spread to all the nations (Amos 9:11-12; Micah 4:1-2)

**3. The sanctification ministry of the Holy Spirit grounded in the resurrection of Christ**

a. The power used to help us fight sin and grow in holiness is the same power used to raise Jesus from the grave (Rom. 8:11-13)

b. When a believer is immersed in the name of Christ, resurrection power is both dramatized and bestowed (Rom. 6:4-7; Col. 2:12-13)

**Intercession as Our High Priest**

**1. As our high priest in heaven, Jesus intercedes for the forgiveness of sins committed by believers**

a. Jesus covers the sins of Christians who maintain a genuine faith and repentance in their hearts (1 John 1:8-2:2)

b. Jesus will provide for our forgiveness forever (Heb. 7:25)

**2. As our high priest in heaven, Jesus presents our prayer requests to God**

a. Jesus truly understands our prayer needs by virtue of his Incarnation experiences (Heb. 4:14-15)

b. Jesus can take us near to the mercy seat of God in prayer by virtue of his blood shed at Calvary (Heb. 4:16; 10:19-22)

**3. As our high priest in heaven, Jesus will serve as our defense advocate at the Judgment**

a. Jesus will have standing to intercede for us on the basis of his atoning death at Calvary (Rom. 8:33-34)

b. Jesus will have standing to intercede for us on the basis of his resurrection from the dead and ascension to glory

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

**General Studies in Christology**

Donley, Jeffrey R. W. “Christology: The Study of Christ,” in *What the Bible Says About Basic Theology*, pp. 85-114. Joplin, MO: College Press, 1988.

Restoration; good summary

Erickson, Millard J. *The Word Became Flesh: A Contemporary Incarnational Christology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1991.

Conservative evangelical; a thorough study; always a good author to read

Marshall, I. Howard. *The Origins of New Testament Christology*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1976.

Conservative evangelical; well respected author

Pressley, Johnny. “Jesus Christ,” in *Essentials of Christian Faith*, pp. 49-68. Edited by Steve Burris. Joplin, MO: College Press, 1992.

Restoration; summary of person and work of Christ; you know what to expect

Smith, James. *What the Bible Says About the Promised Messiah*. Joplin, MO: College Press, 1984.

Restoration; good in-depth study of Old Testament messianic texts

Stott, John R. W. “Part One: Christ’s Person” and “Part Three: Christ’s Work,” in *Basic Christianity*, pp. 21-60, 81-105. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1958.

Conservative evangelical; good simple presentation, in an apologetics format

Warfield, Benjamin Breckinridge. *The Person and Work of Christ*. Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1950.

Conservative Calvinist; a dated style, but still thought-provoking

**The Person of Christ**

Berkouwer, G. C. *The Person of Christ*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1954.

Conservative Calvinist; critique of liberal views; somewhat dated now

Boettner, Loraine. “The Person of Christ,” in *Studies in Theology*, pp. 140-269. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1947.

Conservative Calvinist; somewhat dated, but still some good observations

Bowman, Robert M., Jr. *Jehovah’s Witnesses, Jesus Christ, and the Gospel of John*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1989.

Conservative evangelical; good critique of Jehovah’s Witnesses Christology

Cullmann, Oscar. *The Christology of the New Testament*. Trans. Shirley C. Guthrie & Charles A. M. Hall. Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1959.

Moderate theological position; strong scholarship

Gromacki, Robert G. *The Virgin Birth: Doctrine of Deity*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1981.

Conservative evangelical; somewhat dated

Groothuis, Douglas. *Revealing the New Age Jesus*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990.

Conservative evangelical; good critique of new age Christology

Harris, Murray J. *Jesus as God: The New Testament Use of Theos in Reference to Jesus*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1992.

Conservative evangelical

Hengstenberg, E. W. *The Christology of the Old Testament*. Reprint edition, Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1956.

Old conservative classic

MacDowell, Josh, and Bart Larson. *Jesus: A Biblical Defense of the Deity of Christ*. San Bernardino, CA: Here’s Life Publishers, 1983.

Conservative evangelical; popular style, but with depth

Machen, J. Gresham. *The Virgin Birth of Christ*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1965 reprint of 1930 edition.

Old conservative classic

McDonald, H. D. *Jesus—Human and Divine*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1968.

Conservative evangelical; highly recommended

Morris, Leon. *The Lord from Heaven*. Chicago, IL: InterVarsity, 1958.

Conservative evangelical; good material

Reymond, Robert L. *Jesus, Divine Messiah: The New Testament Witness*. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1990.

Conservative evangelical; thorough

Rhodes, Ron. *The Counterfeit Christ of the New Age Movement*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1990.

Conservative evangelical; good critique of new age Christology

Vos, Geerhardus. *The Self-Disclosure of Jesus*. 2nd edition. Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1953.

Conservative evangelical; critique of liberal views; somewhat dated

Warfield, Benjamin Breckinridge. *The Lord of Glory*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1974 reprint of 1907 edition.

Conservative Calvinist; good collection of deity titles for Jesus

Wells, David F. *The Person of Christ*. Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1984.

Conservative evangelical; recent critique of liberal views

**The Work of Christ**

Berkouwer, G. C. *The Work of Christ*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965.

Conservative Calvinist; critique of liberal views; somewhat dated

Marshall, I. Howard. *The Work of Christ*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1970.

Conservative evangelical; well respected author

McDonald, H. D. *The Atonement of the Death of Christ*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1985.

Conservative evangelical; good presentation

Morris, Leon. *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1955.

Conservative evangelical; strong scholarly work, based upon his doctoral dissertation

Morris, Leon. *The Atonement: Its Meaning and Significance*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1983.

Conservative evangelical; less technical than previous entry; highly recommended

Stott, John R. W. *Cross of Christ*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986.

Conservative evangelical; highly recommended

**Christ’s Death and Passover**

**Submitted by Brian A. Schulz**

**The Passover Timing**

 The synoptic Gospels speak of Jesus and His disciples in the upper room partaking of the Passover meal while the Gospel of John states that the Passover lambs were being sacrificed as Christ was dying upon the cross. These seemingly differing timelines could pose a problem for a proponent of the historicity and authenticity of the Bible. However, three reasonable offerings have been produced providing reasonable explanation for the apparent discrepancy. These attempts are stated by author John R.W. Stott recounting the words of Joachim Jeremias:

 The best seems to be to declare both correct, each having been followed by a different group. Either the Pharisees and the Sadducees were using alternative calendars, which differed from each other by a day, or there were so many pilgrims in Jerusalem for the festival (perhaps as many as 100,000) that the Galileans killed their lambs on the Thursday and ate them that evening, while the Judeans observed the celebration one day later. (Stott, 74)

Either of these explanations is reasonable and shouldn’t cast any major doubt as to the historicity of these events and the Biblical account.

**The Passover and the Cross**

 “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.” John the Baptist declared this statement which was wrought with meaning. This meaning was inextricably linked to the Passover Lamb of the Exodus account rooted in Israel’s rich history. Without a doubt John knew what he was saying when he uttered these powerful words. Jesus was to be the same as the Passover lamb. Much could be written and detailed as to the many nuances that manifest in this comparison of the Christ and the Passover lamb. For the purpose of this exposition the highlights will be addressed. The Passover and the Cross have much in common. With each of these the shedding of blood instituted and initiated a covenant between man and God. In each of these substitution takes places; the Passover lamb taking the place of the firstborn child and the Christ taking the place of mankind. Each of these also highlights the necessity of shed blood. The old hymn states, “When I see the blood, I will pass, I will pass over you.” The shedding of blood of the Passover lamb applied to the doorpost of the house provided salvation for the Israelites, and the shedding of blood on the Cross by Christ applied to the sinner at baptism provides salvation for the penitent believer. The parallels are many and rich with meaning.

**The Passover and the Lord’s Supper**

 As there as many parallels between the Cross of Christ and the Passover, there are just about as many parallels with the Passover and the Lord’s Supper. It is clear in hindsight that God was orchestrating these events for this very moment in time in order that all these events would be woven together like a majestic patchwork quilt. This very moment in time was the setting of the Passover. With the backdrop of the Passover layers upon layers of meaning and significance would be added to the already momentous events which were to take place surrounding the Crucifixion. The primary purpose of the Passover Meal tied to the Feast of Unleavened Bread was to simply look back. So many places in Scripture is emphasized by God for mankind to remember, to look back. The Passover annual celebration was instituted for this very reason. This is exactly what Christ was attempting to set in place as he uttered the words, “Do this in remembrance of Me.” The need to look back and to remember is crucial for the Christian to be able to move forward. The events which surrounded the Cross must never be forgotten, but also they must be kept fresh, front and center. This was the goal of the Lord’s Supper. Another interesting parallel is where Christ took the phrase, “the bread of affliction which of forefathers ate” and turned it into, “this is my body which is broken for you.” The bread played a key role in each institution. Another interesting parallel is that Communion is a corporate event, a shared meal. Morris states, “Passover reminds us that we are members of one another.” (Morris, 104) The exact same dynamic takes place in the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. We see and celebrate all those who have been delivered from the bondage of sin. We belong to one another and to the Lord.

**Christ’s Death and Propitiation**

**Submitted by Brian A. Schulz**

**The Meaning of “Propitiation”**

 The current state of affairs in theological circles concerning the topic of propitiation has brought forth the repeated refrain that God is love relegating the idea of propitiation to the proverbial “backburner.” While the statement “God is love” is undeniably true it shouldn’t snuff out the statement that God is equally and undeniably holy. It is in this overemphasis/de-emphasis dynamic that the term propitiation has been misunderstood by most. The perceived need to heighten the love of God and to diminish His Wrath has forced translators of the Holy Scriptures like C. H. Dodd to change the English word from propitiation (meaning an offering which turns away wrath) to expiation (making amends for a wrong). (Morris, 151) Dodd was a major proponent of doing away with the concept of propitiation for this concept was not consistent with the nature of a loving God. The archaic notion which was rooted in pagan thought according to Dodd was a foreign concept to Christianity. Dodd attempted to prove his case by appealing to the original Greek text. In doing so, he appealed to instances where the Greek *hilaskomai* does not convey the idea of turning away wrath. Leon Morris explains: “Dodd argues from passages in the first group that the words other than *hilaskomai* that translate *kpr* have nothing to do with anger. They have meanings like ‘to sanctify’ or ‘to cancel (sins)’. He reasons that *hilaskomai* must have a similar meaning and that it likewise has nothing to do with anger.” (Morris, 159) While this argument on the surface might seem to have value it does not by any mean do complete justice to the available meanings that can be associated with *hilaskomai*. Morris goes on to explain that this explanation has some serious issues, “One is that it completely ignores the realities of translation. Any word can have a range of meaning; its meaning is like the area in a circle rather than like a point. It is rarely the case that the circle of meaning of a word in one language exactly overlaps the meaning of a word in another language. The translator will select one word for the overlapping area and other words for the areas where the two do not overlap.” (Morris, 159) This is but a brief explanation of the many inconsistencies of the Dodd position. Morris does a more than adequate job of dismantling this attempt to do away with this important concept. So while expiation is a noble and real Biblical concept, propitiation is likewise a noble and real Biblical concept. Each has their place in proper doctrine. That being said, propitiation, needs to be kept in its proper place due to the fact that God is holy, and that when his holiness come into contact with sin it does indeed become wrath; wrath that is personally directed at the individual sinner. This wrath needs propitiation. Thanks be to God that He provided the atoning sacrifice which does indeed turn away His holy wrath.

**The Contribution of Leon Morris**

 The phrase “God of the Old Testament” implies that the “God of the New Testament” is somehow a different entity. Summing up the scripture, God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. The notion that the God of Judaism and the God of Christianity are indeed different entities is simply a false and misleading notion. Again, the overemphasis of the love of God has led to this dynamic. The God of the Old Testament is perceived as wrathful and harsh while the God of the New Testament is perceived as loving and cuddly, like a kind grandpa. This is simply false. God’s ultimate attributes are His ultimate attributes. He doesn’t change. His nature is concrete. That being said, Leon Morris clearly recognizes the ultimate attributes of God, Holiness and Love. These two attributes set the backdrop for a proper understanding of the term propitiation. Summing up Dr. Jack Cottrell from his work, *The Faith Once for All*; God’s love, when confronted with sin, becomes grace. Likewise, God’s holiness, when confronted with sin, becomes wrath. (Cottrell, 88-92) With this understanding Morris in his book *The Atonement* devotes an entire chapter to this concept, propitiation. He contributed much to the defense of this concept as he clearly demonstrated the examples in both the Old and New Testament of the wrath of God being poured out on the people. This is not a popular concept, yet just because its not popular does not diminish the truth of its existence. Morris also contributed a proper understanding of the Greek and how it should be translated into English which was the main crutch of Dodd. All in all, Morris contributed a great deal to the proper understanding of this great concept. For what would it really matter if there was no wrath of God concerning sin. Expiation would be but a minor ordeal if not for the necessity of propitiation.

**The Message for the Church**

 The message for the Church begins with a proper understanding of the ultimate attributes of God. His ultimate attribute of holiness and also His ultimate attribute of love set the stage for the proper understanding of propitiation. His love, in the face of sin, becomes grace. Likewise his holiness, in the face of sin becomes wrath. Wrath is like lava bubbling beneath the surface and when sin enter the scene it cannot be contained and erupts forth. It is in His love that He has taken away this wrath. Unlike crude pagan examples of appeasing wrath, Biblical propitiation is much different. It is much different because it is rooted in the nature and action of the one true and perfect God. According to John R. W. Stott, there are three main ways that Biblical propitiation is different from crude pagan ideas. Stott states;

 First, the reason why propitiation is necessary is that sin arouses the wrath of God. Second, the initiative (to make propitiation) has been taken by God himself in his sheer mercy and grace. Third, He was the propitiatory sacrifice. In giving His Son, He was giving Himself.” (Stott 171-172) Mankind sin has caused the wrath of God each according to his own sin to be poured out on the individual. This is a sobering concept. But it is this sobering concept that makes the grace of God leap off the page. If there is no ultimate trouble, then why is salvation necessary or even that big a deal? It is because God in his infinite power and knowledge solved the unsolvable problem before mankind. He took away the wrath and placed it upon His own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. All thanks be to Him that propitiation is real, necessary, and available. His holiness and love both be exalted and praised.