

LESSON 8

THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF CHRIST

Introduction

In considering the Biblical view of Christ, one should take into account the several messianic theologies current in Judah at the time of Jesus' birth. Jesus' own understanding of His mission in the light of those theologies is significant. Several titles which refer to Jesus must be examined in order to determine what they meant to Him and His disciples:

- Messiah,
- Son of Man,
- Son of David,
- Son of God, and
- Servant of Yahweh or Suffering Servant.

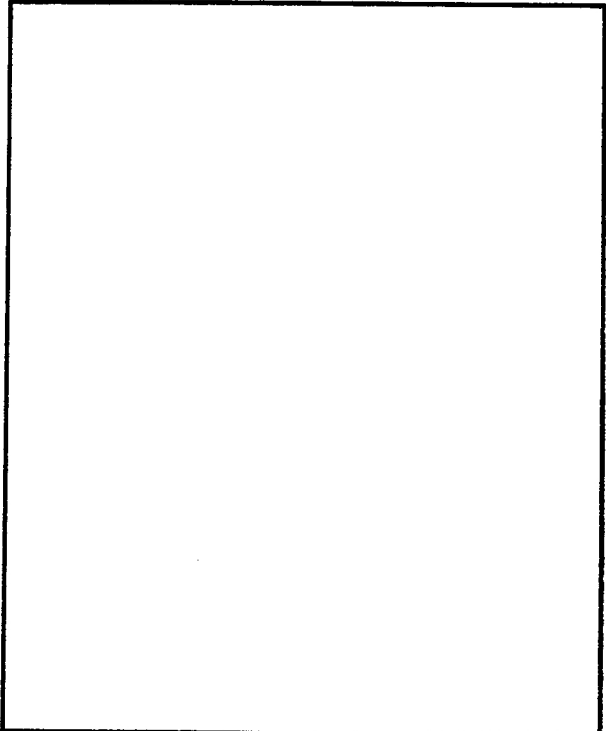
Messiah

Old Testament background

The word 'Christ' is a Greek verbal adjective which translates the Hebrew word *Mesiah* (anointed). Before the Exile, 'the Lord's anointed' was used primarily with reference to the king of Israel. David in particular was regarded as the ideal type. When Judah's historical kingship came to an end in the Exile, the term was shifted to the High Priest.

The Prophets spoke of the Ideal Ruler who was to come (Isa. 9:6f.; 11:1-10; Jer. 23:5f.; and Ezek. 34:23f.). Jeremiah spoke of a righteous branch from David who would reign as king (23:5). Isaiah also identified him with the throne of David (9:7). Perhaps these prophecies were a development of Yahweh's promise to David that the throne of his kingdom would be established forever (2 Sam. 7:12f.). The righteous character and rule of the descendant of David are emphasized, but he is not designated in a technical sense as 'the Messiah'; however, Isaiah 11:2 states that "the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him ...."

The Psalms do relate the 'seed of David' with the 'anointed of the Lord'. Psalm 89 recalls the Covenant which God had made with David that his



Two other words which have the same meaning as Messiah are: \_\_\_\_\_ , \_\_\_\_\_.

(Christ, anointed)

Jeremiah 23:5 tells of a righteous branch from \_\_\_\_\_ who would be king.

Ezekiel 34:23 refers to the Ideal Ruler as a shepherd like Yahweh's servant \_\_\_\_\_.

(David, David)

'The anointed of the Lord' is related to the seed of \_\_\_\_\_ in Psalm 89:3-4.

(David)

seed would be established upon the throne forever (vv. 3-4). David had been chosen by God as His servant and anointed with holy oil (vv. 19-20). Since David was the chosen of the Lord, he would be strengthened by his Lord and given victory over his enemies (vv. 21-23). The power for the kingdom would come as a result of God's presence in His Holy City. For God's presence to abide, it was necessary for His people to walk uprightly and to keep the Covenant (vv. 30-37), but the people failed to do so; therefore, the Lord hid Himself from His people (vv. 38-50). Because of His promise to establish the throne of David forever, the Lord would not finally forsake Zion (Ps. 132:10-18). The sons of David would sit upon his throne forever. Psalm 2 speaks of the reign of the Lord's anointed (cf. v. 2). The anointed king is described as Yahweh's son (v. 7). The Lord's anointed is identified as David and his descendants forever (Ps. 18:50).

Israel's hope concerning the future Messiah included:

1. He would be a descendant of David according to the promise of God.
2. His power would come from God whose presence inhabited the Temple in Jerusalem. The power was available only during times of righteousness since God withdrew His presence or hid Himself during times of wickedness.
3. David's throne and the kingdom would be established forever.
4. God's chosen or anointed would be called His son. Probably the psalmist did not intend to imply that the son would be divine in nature.
5. The emphasis of the Messianic rule of a descendant of David was nationalistic. It was the political kingdom of Israel which would remain established with Jerusalem as the capital city.
6. God's presence in Jerusalem and His power in establishing the king added an element of mystery to the concept of the kingdom; however, the Messiah and His kingdom were primarily this-worldly, nationalistic, and political. At times, the concept seemed to merge with the hope of a heavenly Son of Man who would come on the clouds.

*Israel hoped the Messiah would be a descendant of \_\_\_\_\_, according to God's promise.*

*Israel believed the Messiah's power would come from God's presence in the Temple in \_\_\_\_\_.*

*Their hope also included the belief that God's chosen would be called His \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(David, Jerusalem, son)*

## Apocalyptic literature

In apocalyptic literature there developed the hope of an eschatological kingdom which would be primarily other-worldly, universalistic, and transcendent. The kingdom would be established under the dominion of the Son of Man. The belief appears clearly in Daniel's night vision:

And behold, with the clouds of heaven  
One like a Son of Man was coming,  
And He came up to the Ancient of Days  
And was presented before Him.  
And to Him was given dominion,  
Glory and a kingdom,  
That all the peoples, nations, and men of  
every language  
Might serve him.  
His dominion is an everlasting dominion  
Which will not pass away;  
And His kingdom is one  
Which will not be destroyed (Dan. 7:13-14—NASB).

Several important facts need to be noted in this Scripture.

1. He is a heavenly, mysterious Being.
2. He was given dominion and a kingdom by the Ancient of Days (God).
3. His kingdom is universal, including people of various nations.
4. His kingdom is everlasting.

It is important to note that the kingdoms of the Messiah and the Son of Man are everlasting and are established by the power of God. The kingdom of the Messiah is more nationalistic with a human ruler who is empowered by God's presence. The kingdom of the Son of Man is more transcendent, universalistic, and dependent on divine power rather than human effort.

## Inter-biblical developments

About the middle of the first century B.C. (50 to 75 years before Christ's birth), a non-Biblical book, The Similitudes of Enoch, spoke of the Son of Man whom the kings and the mighty "shall see and recognize how he sits on the throne of his glory" (62:3). The kings and the mighty "shall fall down before him on their faces and worship ... that Son of Man" (62:9). He will reign in righteousness (46:3), and "he shall be the light of the Gentiles" (48:4). He will bring hope to those who are troubled in heart (48:4). He is the anointed of the Lord: "the dominion of his Anointed that he may be potent and mighty on the earth" (48:10; 52:4). "In him dwells the spirit of wisdom and the spirit which

Match the description of Israel's concepts of the reign of the Messiah and the reign of the Son of Man.

- |                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| ___ 1. The reign of the Messiah.    | a. More transcendent, universalistic, and dependent on divine power. |
| ___ 2. The reign of the Son of Man. | b. More nationalistic, this-worldly, and political.                  |

(b, a)

gives insight, and the spirit of understanding and of might ..." (49:3).

### The Suffering Servant (Isa. 42-53)

In the fifth century B.C., an inspired prophet spoke of God's Servant who would suffer. Many of the Servant's characteristics were similar to those of the descendant (branch or seed) of David. Characteristics of the Servant of the Lord (noted below as S) and the Davidic Messiah (noted below as M) are:

1. Both are servants (S—Isa. 42:1; M—Ezek. 34:23f., Zech. 3:8).
2. Both will receive the Spirit of Yahweh (S—Isa. 42:1; M—Isa. 11:2).
3. Both will gain victory through the words of their mouths (S—Isa. 49:2; M—Isa. 11:4).
4. Both will restore the tribes of Jacob (S—Isa. 49:6; M—Jer. 23:8).
5. Both will be exalted among the nations (S—Isa. 49:7; M—Ps. 89:27).
6. Both are referred to as 'root' or 'tender shoot' or 'branch' from David (S—Isa. 53:2; M—Isa. 11:1, Jer. 23:5).
7. Both will be reproached and rejected (S—Isa. 52:13-53:12; M—Ps. 89:50).

### The Son of Man

William Manson wrote that in the vision of Daniel, the Son of Man was not invested with any of the titles or attributes of the Jewish Messiah. He functioned merely as a symbol or personification of the Jewish nation, the people of the "saints of the most High," for whom an everlasting kingdom was intended (cf. Dan. 7:18, 22-27).<sup>1</sup> Instead of being an individual, some scholars suggest that the son-of-man concept reflects corporate personality in which the righteous remnant of Israel is spoken of in personal terms. The same suggestion has been made for Yahweh's Servant in Isaiah 42-53. In the earlier Servant chapters, the Servant is definitely identified

<sup>1</sup> William Manson, Jesus the Messiah (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1943), p. 176.

Who was the prophet who wrote in the fifth century B.C. about the Suffering Servant?

Yes or No?  
Are characteristics of the Suffering Servant and the Davidic Messiah similar? \_\_\_\_\_  
Read them again carefully.

(Isaiah, yes)

Before deciding if the following statement is true or false read Daniel 7:13.

Some scholars say the Son of Man is a personification of the Jewish nation.

(true)

with the righteous remnant of Israel. In Isaiah 53, the Servant seems to refer to an individual. The New Testament disciples were convinced that the Servant in Isaiah 53 was Jesus (cf. Acts 8:32-36). If the Son of Man of Daniel 7:13 referred originally to the "saints of the most High," the concept had been individualized by the time of The Similitudes of Enoch in the middle of the first century.

During the Persian period the hope of a deliverer of David's line waned and there seemed little possibility of deliverance from that quarter. "Men's hopes were set rather on the intervention and kingly rule of God himself than on any earthly representative, and on the keeping of his Law as the primary means of its appearing."<sup>2</sup> When the Maccabeans led in the revolt against Antiochus Epiphanes about 160 B.C. and gave partial liberation to the Jewish nation, hopes for the traditional Davidic leader appeared again.

Succeeding leaders of the Hasmonean House did not fulfil Jewish hopes; therefore, the people began to look again for a heavenly deliverer. The Son of Man in Enoch was an expression of that hope about the middle of the first century B.C.

#### Expectations at the Time of Jesus' Birth

The Hasmoneans usurped the high priestly office, but they were not righteous leaders. According to the Dead Sea scrolls, hope developed that a teacher and priestly leader would appear who would stand alongside the Davidic leader and would have precedence over him in the performance of his priestly functions (cf. *Manual of Discipline*, 9:11). In other writings, the Davidic leader played the more important part. The 'priestly Messiah' (anointed priest) and 'kingly Messiah' (anointed king) were to play together a leading part in the coming Kingdom.

About fifty years before the birth of Jesus, 'Messiah' became a technical title and took on new meaning. Instead of referring to a descendant of the line of David who would be publicly anointed with oil, Messiah became the designation of the Ideal Ruler of the coming Kingdom. In the Psalm of Solomon, he is described as:

2

D. S. Russell, The Jews from Alexander to Herod (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 144.

During which period in history was there less hope of a deliverer of David's line?

When did that hope become renewed?

(Persian, in the Maccabean revolt, 160 B.C.)

The Dead Sea scrolls describe two messianic leaders as (1) \_\_\_\_\_ and

(2) \_\_\_\_\_

(teacher, priestly leader, the Davidic leader or kingly Messiah)

A righteous King and taught of God is he  
 that reigneth over them;  
 And there shall be no iniquity in his days  
 in their midst,  
 For all shall be holy and their King is the  
 Lord's Messiah.  
 For he shall not put his trust in horse and  
 rider and bow,  
 Nor shall he multiply under himself gold  
 and silver for war, ...  
 The Lord himself is his king, and the hope  
 of him that is strong in the hope of God.  
 And he shall have mercy upon all the nations  
 that come before him in fear,  
 For he shall strike the earth with the word  
 of his mouth even for evermore, he  
 shall bless the people of the Lord with  
 wisdom and gladness.  
 He himself also is pure from sin, so that  
 he may rule a mighty people, and  
 rebuke princes and overthrow sinners  
 by the might of his word (17:35ff.).

The New Testament Understanding of Jesus

Luke tells us that during the earthly life of Jesus the people were in expectation (3:15). The accounts of Simeon's and Anna's prophecies in connexion with the purification after Jesus' birth indicate that the people were expecting God to intervene in Jewish history and to deliver them from the enemy. Nationalistic feelings were strong; therefore, the majority of the people appeared to have been expecting a king of the Davidic line who would establish a political kingdom and defeat the Romans. According to the Synoptic writers, the two questions facing the disciples of Jesus and other Jews were:

Is Jesus the Messiah?  
 What kind of Messiah is He?

The second question is the basis of continuing disagreements among Bible students.

A teacher of righteousness

Jesus was addressed as 'Rabbi' or 'Teacher' more than by any other title. He was the teacher of righteousness who instructed people how to live in order to experience the presence of God in His Kingdom (Matt. 5:2ff.). A large part of His three-year earthly ministry was spent in teaching His disciples concerning their relationship to the Father in the Kingdom of God.

*The kind of Messianic leader the Jews were expecting at the time of Jesus' birth was a king of the line of \_\_\_\_\_ who would establish a \_\_\_\_\_ kingdom and defeat the \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(David, political, Romans)*

*By what title was Jesus addressed more than any other? \_\_\_\_\_*

*(Rabbi or Teacher)*

As the Messiah

The works which Jesus performed gave indication that He was the chosen of God who had been endowed with unusual divine power. He performed the works which Isaiah predicted would take place when God came to save His people (35:4ff.). Isaiah had predicted that the eyes of the blind would be opened, and the ears of the deaf would be unstopped. The lame would be healed and the dumb would be given speech. When the disciples of the imprisoned John inquired whether Jesus was the Christ (Messiah), He answered that John should be shown His works in which the blind received their sight, the lame walked, lepers were cleansed, and the gospel was preached to the poor (Matt. 11:2ff.).

Matthew wrote his Gospel to show that Jesus met the qualifications of the Messiah predicted by the Prophets. The genealogy in Matthew 1 shows that Christ was a descendant of David. His virgin birth, which was a sign of God's presence with Him, was a fulfilment of Isaiah 7:14 (cf. Matt. 1:23). He was born in Bethlehem, the city of David (Matt. 2:4ff.). The Spirit of God came upon Him at His baptism (cf. Matt. 3:16; Isa. 11:2). His preaching emphasized the need for repentance and righteousness in fulfilment of the emphasis on the righteous branch of David (Isa. 11:5). Jesus claimed to be the fulfilment of the Law and the Prophets (the Old Testament—Matt. 5:17ff.). Many of the parables of Jesus centred in the nature of the Kingdom, the task of Kingdom citizens, and the growth and consummation of the Kingdom.

Peter confessed Jesus to be the Christ (Messiah) at Caesarea of Philippi. Jesus did not deny Peter's statement but He did imply that Peter did not fully understand the meaning of Messiah. According to Matthew, Jesus stated that "flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (16:17). Throughout His earthly ministry, His nature remained a mystery to His disciples. After Peter confessed Him as the Messiah, He began to teach them that He must go to Jerusalem and die (cf. Matt. 16:21; 17:22f.; 20:18f.).

Mark emphasized the misunderstanding of the Kingdom by the contemporaries of Jesus. The Pharisees expected the Kingdom to come when they established legal righteousness by keeping the Law. They opposed the healing ministry of Jesus performed on the Sabbath and His claim to forgive sins. Jesus was accused of being devil-possessed (Mark 3:22). Because of the opposition of the Pharisees and the misunderstanding of the nature of the Messiah, Jesus repeatedly told His disciples not to spread abroad the report of His miracles (cf. Mark 8:26, 30, etc.). When Jesus performed the miracles, the unclean

Matthew's Gospel shows that Jesus met the qualifications of the Messiah predicted by the \_\_\_\_\_.

(Prophets)

Is this statement true or false?

Mark emphasized that the Pharisees and other Jews misunderstood the nature of the Messiah. \_\_\_\_\_

(true)

spirits inhabiting the tormented recognized Him as the Son of God (cf. Mark 3:11, 5:7). For Mark the miracles were signs of divine power, a 'mystery' which was at first veiled to men and continued to be hidden from "those outside" (Mark 4:11-12).

Jesus was called the Son of David (Mark 10:47-49), but He rejected the title because it was not applicable to the one who is David's Lord (Mark 12:35-37). The Son of David was equivalent to the nationalistic Messiah.

Luke emphasized the idea of Messiah as Son of David. He pointed out that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the city of David (Luke 2:4), and the angel who appeared to Mary stated that Jesus "shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (1:32-33). Jesus was identified as the Christ (Messiah) of God in Peter's confession at Philippi (9:20) and by the rulers during His crucifixion (23:35). The hope that Jesus would restore the Kingdom to Israel is expressed in Luke 24:21 and Acts 1:6.

#### The Humanity of Jesus

The early Church was faced with the heretical teachings of the Docetics who held that the body of Jesus was not real and of the Ebionites who denied His divinity. The Church has continued to struggle with the problem of maintaining a proper balance between His humanity and divinity. To place too much emphasis on His humanity robs Him of the mystery of divinity and the power of redemption. Liberal theologians tend to see Jesus as a good man who set a good example for us to follow but who is unable to transform life with divine power. On the other hand, Catholic theologians have so exalted Christ that He is not available to man except through intermediaries.

A careful reading of the Gospels reveals that the contemporaries of Jesus had no difficulty recognizing His humanity. The question of His divinity was not as easy for them to solve. Jesus received His humanity from Mary, His mother. He experienced normal intellectual and physical growth and development (cf. Luke 2:52). He assumed family responsibilities as the eldest son until He was about thirty years of age (cf. Luke 3:23). He was known in Galilee as the carpenter and the son of Mary (Mark 6:3). Four of His brothers are mentioned by name: James, Joses, Juda, and Simon. The fact that He had sisters is mentioned also.

*Emphasis on the Messiah as the Son of David is found in \_\_\_\_\_ Gospel.*

*(Luke's)*

*Can you list five evidences of Jesus' humanity? Try it.*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

*(Compare your answers with the text)*

In protesting Docetism, John emphasized the humanity of Jesus: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (Jno. 1:14). In His human body it was possible for the disciples to touch and to see Him—He was no phantom (1 Jno. 1:1).

Paul mentioned that Jesus Christ our Lord "was made of the seed of David according to the flesh" (Rom. 1:3). He "took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2:7)—He was born of a woman (Gal. 4:4). The writer of Hebrews emphasized His humanity by stating that Jesus was a partaker of flesh and blood (2:14). Since Jesus entered the experience of humanity, He is able to understand human infirmities (Heb. 4:15).

Jehovah's Witnesses have held that Jesus was human during His earthly life, but His human nature was annihilated in death, and He was resurrected to a life of divinity. Early Ebionites believed that Jesus was human until the Christ descended upon Him in the form of a dove from the Sovereign Power at His baptism. The Spirit departed from Him before His death.

At His birth, Jesus the Son of God took on the form of man which He continues to have. Before his death, Stephen recognized Jesus in the position of authority and power at the right hand of God (Acts 7:56). Although His resurrected body put aside the limitations of flesh and blood, He has continued with the form of humanity and has become the head of a new humanity (1 Cor. 15:45). The human nature shares in the destiny made possible through the resurrection.

### The Divinity of Jesus

#### His Virgin Birth

Matthew and Luke state that Jesus, the Son of God, was born without a human father. He was begotten of God in the womb of the Virgin Mary through the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35). The other New Testament writers do not mention Mary's unique conception. Some scholars have argued that the thesis of the Virgin Birth was not dignified enough for John and Paul to mention. Rudolph Bultmann contended that the silence of other writers indicates that the early Church knew nothing of the Virgin Birth. Brunner stated the Apostles never mentioned it when they preached or taught; therefore, we must assume either that the Apostles were unaware of this view or they considered it

What are some other New Testament books besides the four Gospels in which the humanity of Jesus is mentioned?

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

(Romans, Philippians, Galatians, Hebrews)

Which two Gospels give accounts of the Virgin Birth? \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.

State the meaning of the Virgin Birth as found in Luke 1:35.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(Matthew, Luke)

(Compare your answer with the text)

unimportant or even mistaken.<sup>3</sup> He questioned whether man who is born without a human father is a 'true man'. He affirmed that the Virgin Birth narratives of Matthew and Luke can be brought into harmony with the doctrine of the Eternal Son of God and of the Incarnation in John 1, but apart from this reinterpretation there is a clear contradiction. According to Brunner, Matthew and Luke do not refer to the Incarnation of the Eternal Son, but they only deal with the origin of the person of Jesus Christ. He questioned the historical validity of the Virgin Birth accounts because:

1. It was not a doctrine of early Church preaching.
2. The genealogies of Jesus point to male forbears.
3. The concept is based upon a mistaken translation of Isaiah 7:14.
4. Knowledge of the Virgin Birth could come only from the mother of Jesus and cannot be verified otherwise.
5. The theory of the Virgin Birth was probably an attempt to explain the Pauline phrase "born of the seed of David according to the flesh." He concludes that we can believe in the divinity of Jesus and the Incarnation of the Eternal Son of God in spite of Matthew 1 and Luke 1, but not because of these two passages.<sup>4</sup>

Biblical revelation and Christian experience claim that God is encountered in the person of Jesus Christ who is the Eternal Son of God. The doctrine of the Incarnation states that the Son of God who from all eternity was in the bosom of the Father, uncreated, proceeded from the Being of God Himself and became man. He is the eternal and personal Word of God who manifests to us the Being of the Father in terms of our flesh and blood.

The fact that the Virgin Birth is not mentioned beyond Matthew 1 and Luke 1 does not disprove its authenticity. The topic would not be a matter of common conversation. It is probable that the full significance of the Virgin Birth was not understood immediately. The report of such a miracle would not be as astonishing to a people who believed in God as Creator as to our generation which tends to look to science for truth.

<sup>3</sup>Emil Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of Creation, p. 354.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 355-356.

Match the parts of sentences which make correct statements.

- |                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| — 1. The Virgin Birth | a. deals with the origin of the person of Jesus Christ.   |
| — 2. The Incarnation  | b. states that the Son of God who from all eternity was in the bosom of the Father was made flesh and dwelt among us. |

(a, b)

In spite of Brunner's argument that the Virgin Birth accounts arose from Paul's doctrine that God sent His Son in the flesh, the reverse is probably true. Paul did not make a distinction between the natures of the resurrected Christ and the Spirit. He stated that the indwelling Spirit of Christ makes us partakers of Christ (cf. Rom. 8:9). The indwelling Spirit of Christ is the same as the Spirit of God and can be referred to as "Christ in you" (Rom. 8:9-10). If Paul's doctrine of Christ was not based on the Virgin Birth, adoptionism, which holds that the divine Christ came on the man Jesus at His baptism and gave to Him supernatural powers, would be an accurate assessment of Paul's doctrine of Christ. Paul may have implied the Virgin Birth in the statement, "God sent forth his Son, made [born] of a woman ... " (Gal. 4:4). Certainly he knew about it since Luke was his companion. It was necessary for Paul to guard his statements about it since the Gentiles might identify the Virgin Birth with the Greek myths that the gods cohabited with women who gave birth to gods.

A person inherits his nature from his progenitors. The two natures of Christ, the divine and human, are best understood in relation to the Virgin Birth. The Scripture teaches that Christ was eternally with the Father and took on human form. The Spirit and the Word are God's instruments for relating to the material. The divine nature of Jesus came through the Spirit and the human nature through Mary. Jesus' human nature is not pre-existent. The divine nature through the Holy Spirit, who is eternal, accounts for His pre-existence with the Father.

The Virgin Birth is essential to the doctrine of the two natures of Christ in one person. The eternal divine nature joining the human nature in a body of flesh is the doctrine of the Incarnation. The Virgin Birth explains how the two natures came together in one person.

Luke explained that the "power of the Highest" would overshadow Mary and give origin to a holy Child who would be called "the Son of God" (1:35). Since God creates through His power, some have concluded that a child who is no more than a human being resulted from the activity of the Holy Spirit. The angel which appeared to Mary explained that no ordinary child would be born. He would be holy, that is, set apart for God's service, and He would be called "the Son of God." After God promised David's descendants the establishment of an eternal kingdom, He stated, "I will be his father, and he shall be my son" (2 Sam. 7:14). Psalm 2:7, which is Messianic, states, "the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son." The announcement of the angel to Mary concerning "that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" conveyed a unique

*Incarnation is the eternal \_\_\_\_\_ nature joining the \_\_\_\_\_ nature in a body of \_\_\_\_\_.*

*How the two natures came together in one person is explained by the V \_\_\_\_\_ B \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(divine, human, flesh, Virgin Birth)*

*Luke 1:31-35 explains that the " \_\_\_\_\_ of the H \_\_\_\_\_ " would overshadow Mary and give origin to a holy Child who would be called "the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_."*

*(Compare your answer with the text.)*

meaning to the followers of Jesus. The disciples believed that Jesus as God's Son stood in a different relationship to God than was conveyed by the Old Testament reference to Israel as God's Son.

John's Gospel begins with the pre-existent Christ who was the Word. Not only was the Word with God, but the Word was God. The Word was the instrument through which God created the world (1:3). The Word took on tangible form when it was made flesh (1:14). John does not give an account of Jesus' birth and early life. Rather, he gives the divine meaning of the birth and life of Christ. For John, God became incarnate in the Son and dwelt with His people.

Since the betrothal was a covenant almost equivalent to marriage, Joseph was surprised when he discovered that his bride-to-be was already pregnant. An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and explained that the child which Mary had conceived was of the Holy Ghost (Matt. 1:20). The meaning of the miraculous event was "God with us" (Matt. 1:23).

Paul taught that God's Son, Jesus Christ, who is our Lord was generated from the "seed of David according to the flesh; And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:3-4). A clearer statement of the Incarnation is in Romans 8:3: "God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh ...." The expression could mean that the Lord in His earthly ministry possessed a completely human form and that His physical body was capable of sinning as human bodies are, or that He had only the form of a man and was looked upon as a human being. Possibly Paul used the word "likeness" to bring out both concepts that Jesus in His earthly career was similar to sinful men and yet not absolutely like them. Christ was like men, yet without sin. Sin, however, is not part of true humanity but of fallen humanity.

Paul makes a similar statement about Jesus in Philippians 2:7: "But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." According to this Scripture, Paul emphasized that the Incarnation is condescension and self-limitation on God's part. This concept is often referred to as the *kenosis*. It is based on the Greek word which means "to empty." Christ gave up the appearance of His divinity and took on the form of a slave. He emptied Himself or divested Himself of His privileges of divine existence. The self-emptying process reached its climax in His death on a criminal's cross. The Incarnation as well as the Cross was an act of sacrifice.

*John 1:1-14 teaches that God became \_\_\_\_\_ in the \_\_\_\_\_ and dwelt with His \_\_\_\_\_.*  
*(incarnate, Son, people)*

*Matthew 1:18-23 tells of Joseph's dream when he was told that Mary would give birth to a Son conceived by the \_\_\_\_\_.*  
*(Holy Spirit)*

*Romans 8:3 is a clear statement of the \_\_\_\_\_.*  
*(Incarnation)*

*Philippians 2:7 states Jesus gave up the appearance of His divine \_\_\_\_\_ and took on the form of a \_\_\_\_\_.*  
*(nature, servant)*

## His sinless life

The sinless life of Jesus coincides with the uniqueness of His birth. Although men are not forced to sin, they possess such a strong inclination to sin that it is inevitable that they will. Jesus was human in nature, yet He was without sin. He was born of a woman and received humanity but He did not inherit sin through His birth. He could be tempted to sin as other human beings, yet He had the strength to resist temptation.

Paul stated that Jesus was sinless and connected His sinlessness with our redemption: "Christ was innocent of sin, and yet for our sake God made him one with the sinfulness of men" (2 Cor. 5:21-NEB). When the sinless Christ took on our sins, we received His righteousness which is the righteousness of God. The writer of Hebrews pointed out that Christ was tested in all respects exactly as we are but He did not commit any sin (4:15). As our High Priest who offered up Himself as the sacrifice for our sins, He was a holy, guileless, undefiled, spotless, unblemished sacrifice for us (7:26). Peter pointed out that, although Christ suffered for sins, He was just and innocent (1 Peter 3:18). Peter implied that His sinless condition was essential for our salvation. The Just was put to death for the unjust. John also taught that the righteousness of Christ was essential to the removal of our sins (1 Jno. 2:1).

At the baptism of Jesus, it was divinely revealed that He was the Suffering Messiah (Matt. 3:16f.). The heavenly voice quoted a portion of a Messianic Psalm: "This is my beloved Son" (Ps. 2:7); and a statement from the Suffering Servant section of Isaiah: "In whom I am well pleased" (Isa. 42:1).

As Jesus became fully aware of the Father's will for His life, He was led into the wilderness by the Spirit to meditate upon the revelation and decide whether to follow the will of God for His life or not. Satan approached Him through three human desires. The first temptation involved using His power to become a popular leader by providing bread for Himself and His followers. It was a temptation to use His God-given abilities and powers for personal gain. It offered a quick way to success as a popular leader and king. The second temptation was to gain the attention and the acclaim of men by jumping from the highest part of the Temple. He was enticed to use religion (His relation to God) to accomplish immediate success in gaining a following. The third temptation appealed to the desire for success and wealth. He was tempted to yield to the demands of the people, to go along with the crowd. Satan tempted Jesus to turn His back upon the will of God and to follow the desires of the people to be a political

Two truths concerning Jesus which coincide are His sinless \_\_\_\_\_ and His unique \_\_\_\_\_.

(life, birth)

Match the following Scripture references with their teachings.

- |                 |                       |
|-----------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Hebrews 7:26 | 3. 2 Corinthians 5:21 |
| 2. Hebrews 4:15 | 4. 1 Peter 3:18       |

\_\_\_ Christ was tested in all respects exactly as we are but He did not sin.

\_\_\_ Christ was innocent of sin and yet took on our sins.

\_\_\_ Although Christ suffered for sins, He was just and innocent.

\_\_\_ He was a holy, guileless, undefiled, spotless, unblemished sacrifice for us.

(2, 3, 4, 1)

Jesus' temptation in the wilderness dealt with three human desires:

1. To become a popular \_\_\_\_\_,
2. To gain the attention and acclaim of \_\_\_\_\_,
3. To become \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

(leader, men, successful, wealthy)

Messiah like David and to conquer the surrounding kingdoms. Jesus replied that following the will of God takes precedence over desires growing out of pride and self-interest. Jesus could be tempted like other human beings, but He resisted the temptation.

On a later occasion, Jesus was severely tempted when Peter rebuked Him for speaking of dying in Jerusalem. Peter had in mind that the Messiah would be a victorious, military leader. Jesus' reply that Satan was working through Peter to tempt Him reveals that in His humanity Jesus preferred the success of military victory to a shameful death on the cross. Jesus was not anxious to suffer and die; nevertheless, Christ refused to disobey the will of His heavenly Father. Human natural desires are not sinful, but the yielding to those desires when they are contrary to the will of God is sinful.

Usually anger is considered to be sinful, and on occasions Jesus became angry (Mark 3:5). Anger is sinful when it expresses a selfish motive. People often become angry when their self-interest has been abused. Jesus never became angry when He was mistreated by others, but He became angry when the Pharisees mistreated the innocent. He did not resist violence done to Himself, but He used strong words against those who wronged others. Selfish attitudes and motives and the unnatural use of human desires are sinful instead of the desires themselves.

The possibility that Jesus could be tempted indicates His human nature, but His strength to resist temptation points to His divine nature. Sin is not an essential part of human nature, but the inclination towards sin and moral weakness is the result of Adam's fall.

Jesus as Son of God

The Hellenistic world of Jesus' day had numerous men who claimed to be sons of God and who sometimes were worshipped as manifestations of deity (cf. Acts 8:10; 12:22; etc.). In the Old Testament, the expression 'son of God' might mean no more than a human who was chosen of God for a special purpose such as the king. The meaning of the expression in the Fourth Gospel, Pauline Epistles, Hebrews, and the Epistles of John is not to be confused with the Hellenistic or Old Testament concepts. The significance of Jesus as the Son of God must be understood in the light of Jesus' teachings about God as Father and His own unique relationship to the Father.

True or false?

Jesus was not especially tempted when Peter rebuked Him for speaking of dying.

\_\_\_\_\_

(false)

Match the idea in the lettered column with the terms in the numbered column.

- |                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| ___ 1. His human nature  | a. Jesus' strength to resist temptation        |
| ___ 2. His divine nature | b. The possibility that Jesus could be tempted |

(b,a)

Jesus taught that men may become sons of God by virtue of the unique sonship of Christ. Jesus possessed a unique consciousness of sonship. When he addressed God as Father, He expressed an intimate relationship which characterizes that of an earthly father and son. He did not use 'Father' to express a formal title in worship but to express His intimate relationship to the Father. After Jesus had stated to the Jews that "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (Jno. 5:17), the Jews sought to kill Him because He "said also that *God was his Father, making himself equal with God*" (Jno. 5:18). In His use of Father to speak of His relationship to God, the Jews understood Jesus implied by the expression that He was of the same nature as God.

At the baptism of Jesus, a heavenly voice stated, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). At the transfiguration in which His divine nature shone through His human form, the heavenly voice repeated the words (Matt. 17:5). Peter, along with James and John, recognized Jesus as a great person who was equal with Moses and Elijah. The heavenly voice stated that Jesus as a Son is greater than either Moses or Elijah.

Paul stated that "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:4-5). Those who receive the adoption of sons are not sent forth from the Father. Rather, the Spirit of His Son is sent into their hearts, enabling them to call God 'Father'. Jesus is God's Son by nature; Christians are God's sons by adoption. The adoption comes about as a result of the indwelling Spirit of His Son.

John used the expression the 'only begotten Son' to denote the unique relationship of Christ to the Father. We are sons by the power or Spirit which Christ gives to us, but He is a Son by reason of His unique relationship to the Father. He is the beloved or only begotten Son. 'Only begotten' does not mean that He had an origin in history but that He proceeded from the Father. It is a statement of relationship instead of origin.

#### Jesus as Lord

The secular Greek word *kurios* was sometimes simply an indication of respect. A workman or slave might address his owner as lord or master. The word was used also in a religious sense to denote the divinities of the Hellenistic world. At the time when Christianity originated, 'Lord' was a divine predicate intelligible to the whole Eastern world. It was a suitable word to communicate the nature of Jesus Christ to the Gentile world. In

*Jesus was uniquely conscious of His intimate relationship to \_\_\_\_\_, His \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(God, Father)*

*At Jesus' baptism and again at the transfiguration, a heavenly voice affirmed that Jesus is \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(God's Son)*

*Paul taught that Christians become \_\_\_\_\_ sons of God as the result of the indwelling \_\_\_\_\_ of His Son.*

*(adopted, Spirit)*

Acts and the Pauline Epistles, the expressions 'our Lord', 'the Lord Jesus', 'our Lord Jesus Christ', 'Christ Jesus our Lord', and 'the Lord Christ' were frequently used. 'The Lord' was also suitable for Jewish Christians who used the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament) in which 'Lord' was the word used to represent Yahweh and Adonai. It was also a title used by Aramaic-speaking Jews (cf. 1 Cor. 16:22).

Although the term 'Lord' definitely identified Christ with Yahweh, it was also a term suitable to describe the relation of Jesus to His disciples. The slave called his master 'lord'. The master as lord had complete authority over the slave. The slave responded in total obedience to his lord. When Paul instructed the Romans to "confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus" (Rom. 10:9), perhaps he meant:

1. That as Lord He has ultimate authority over the lives of Christians.
2. That as Jesus He is the Saviour from the condemnation of sin.

To be born into the Kingdom of God means to be indwelt by the Spirit of Christ. The indwelling Spirit is present for the purpose of guiding the life of the believer. Through the indwelling Spirit, Christ is the Master and Lord of life. Unless this is true, a person has not been born into the Kingdom by faith. Satan controls man's life by enticing him to use wrongly his natural desires. Christ as Lord controls man's life through the indwelling Spirit who guides and enables him to do the will of God.

#### The Two Natures of Christ

According to the teachings of the New Testament, Jesus is—

the heavenly Messiah who has established the Kingdom of God,

a human being who has come in the flesh in order to reveal the Father and to identify with sinful man for redemptive purposes,

the Son of God who is one with the Father in nature.

In order to understand Jesus Christ, it is necessary to see Him as both human and divine. The two natures were united in one person at His birth. The two natures are essential for His redemptive mission. As human, He represents sinful humanity before God. As the sinless Son of God, Christ is able to provide for man's redemption by substituting His

*In the Greek Old Testament, used by Jewish Christians, 'Lord' was the word used to represent \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(Yahweh)*

*The term 'Lord' is suitable to describe the relation of Jesus to His \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(followers)*

*In Christ's redemptive mission, which of his two natures represents sinful humanity before God? \_\_\_\_\_*

*By which nature is He able to provide His righteousness for man's sinfulness? \_\_\_\_\_*

*(human, divine)*

righteousness for man's sinfulness. It is important to maintain a proper emphasis on the humanity of Christ; otherwise, He becomes too transcendent. An emphasis only on His divinity minimizes His identity with the human situation and human need. On the other hand, a neglect of His divinity results in the implication that He is unable to do anything for sinful man.

### The Resurrection and Ascension of Christ

The Jews opposed Jesus and judged Him worthy of death because they said He blasphemed by affirming that He was the Son of God (cf. Luke 22:70; Jno. 19:7). This admission of Jesus offended the Jews because they considered that such a claim from a human was offensive to the dignity of God. They considered that they were acting for God in condemning Him to death. When they took Jesus before Pilate, the Romans had no scruples concerning a man's claiming to be related to God. The Emperor claimed to be a god. The Jews, therefore, changed the charge before Pilate to that of His claiming to be Christ (anointed king—Luke 23:2). In response to Pilate's question, Jesus acknowledged that He was the King of the Jews (Luke 23:3). When Pilate questioned Him further, Jesus answered: "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence" (Jno. 18:36). Pilate did not consider that Jesus' claim to be a king was a threat to the Roman Emperor; therefore, he judged Him to be without fault.

The sentencing to death of Jesus gave official judgement that Jesus was guilty of offending God. The disciples used His resurrection by the power of God to prove that Jesus' claims as the Son of God were true. God had not been offended by the claims but had approved His Servant and delivered Him from the punishment brought about by wicked men (cf. Acts 2:22ff.). The resurrection of Jesus was proof to the Apostles that the Jewish religious leaders had actually offended God by rejecting God's Messiah and beloved Son.

After the resurrection of Jesus and His appearances to His disciples, He ascended to the right hand of the Father. As he was being stoned to death, Stephen was given a vision of heaven in which he saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God (cf. Acts 7:55). The writer of Hebrews stated that the ascended and exalted Lord gives assurance of a complete and adequate salvation for those who believe in Him. In His position before the Father, Jesus represents

The disciples used Jesus' resurrection to prove that Jesus' claims as the \_\_\_\_\_ were true.

(Son of God)

man and makes intercession for him (Heb. 7:25). Sinful man who has been saved by grace has not been left to his own strength to secure his salvation. When he fails, he has an Advocate with the Father who makes intercession for him and who continues to provide for his sins (cf. 1 Jno. 2:1f.). As man's representative in heaven, Jesus fills the role of a High Priest (Heb. 7:26). Peter spoke of the exalted Christ as a Prince as well as a Saviour (Acts 5:31). As a Prince, Jesus will come again to receive His Kingdom. He must remain in heaven until all things are put right or "until the time for establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old (Acts 3:21-RSV).

<p><i>As man's representative in Heaven, Jesus fills the role of _____.</i></p> <p><i>(High Priest)</i></p>
<p> </p>

Home Study Exercise

Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3). The following questions are based on the study guide.

1. What is the meaning of Messiah? \_\_\_\_\_
2. List three Davidic descriptions and Scripture references which relate the Ideal Ruler to David. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Name three facts concerning Israel's Messianic hope.
  - (1) \_\_\_\_\_
  - (2) \_\_\_\_\_
  - (3) \_\_\_\_\_
4. How does the reign of the Messiah differ from the reign of the Son of Man?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. List five similarities of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah and the Davidic Messiah.
  - (1) \_\_\_\_\_
  - (2) \_\_\_\_\_
  - (3) \_\_\_\_\_
  - (4) \_\_\_\_\_
  - (5) \_\_\_\_\_
6. Who is the Son of Man in Daniel 7:13? \_\_\_\_\_

7. What Messianic leaders do the Dead Sea scrolls mention? (1) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (2) \_\_\_\_\_
8. What kind of Messianic leader were the Jews expecting at the time of Jesus' birth?  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. What does Matthew's Gospel emphasize about Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. What does Mark emphasize concerning Jesus as the Messiah? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. List five evidences of Jesus' humanity. (1) \_\_\_\_\_  
(2) \_\_\_\_\_  
(3) \_\_\_\_\_  
(4) \_\_\_\_\_ (5) \_\_\_\_\_
12. What is meant by the Virgin Birth and where are accounts of it found? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. Distinguish between the Virgin Birth and the doctrine of the Incarnation. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. How do the Virgin Birth and the Incarnation relate? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
15. List five important Scriptures where the Virgin Birth and Incarnation are presented in the New Testament. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
16. List four Scriptures which teach Jesus' sinlessness. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
17. Name two occasions on which Jesus faced human temptations. (1) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (2) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
18. List three evidences of Jesus' divine sonship.  
(1) \_\_\_\_\_

(2) \_\_\_\_\_

(3) \_\_\_\_\_

19. What two relationships are identified by the term 'lord'? (1) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ (2) \_\_\_\_\_

20. Why are the two natures of Christ essential for His redemptive mission? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

21. How did the resurrection contribute to the disciples' understanding of Jesus?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Supplementary activity (Levels 2 and 3):

1. List the positions of the Docetics, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Gnostics regarding Jesus' humanity.
2. Read pages 223-235 in Christian Doctrine by Shirley C. Guthrie and answer the following questions:
  - (1) How important is the doctrine of Christ (Christology) in comparison to other doctrines?
  - (2) What is the meaning of "conceived by the Holy Ghost"?
  - (3) List five evidences of Jesus' humanity.
  - (4) Outline the discussion on Jesus' sinlessness.

Advanced activity (Level 3):

Read pages 181-193 in Shaping Your Faith by C.W. Christian and answer the following questions:

1. Which should have priority in a system of doctrine, the person or work of Christ?
2. Briefly summarize the three important works Christ has done for us.
3. What does Christ's work affirm about His nature?

Optional reading: Revelation and God by Conner, pages 151-181.  
God Was In Christ by D.M. Baillie, pages 106-156.  
The Doctrine of Man, Vol. II of Systematic Theology by Strong, pages 665-683.

## Seminar Discussion

1. What Messianic expectations did Jesus fulfil?
2. What is the relation of the Virgin Birth to the Incarnation and what is its significance to the understanding of the humanity and divinity of Jesus?
3. Distinguish between the Messiah and the Son of Man. How did the Suffering Servant concept relate to them?
4. How does Jesus as the Son of God differ from the promise to David that his descendant would be God's son? (cf. 2 Sam. 7:12).
5. What is included in the title 'lord' when applied to Jesus?