

Xenos Christian Fellowship
Christian Ministry Unit 1
Introduction to Theology
Week 2 – Christology

Editors' note:

- *Italics (lower case or ALL CAPS) show what students should write in their student outline.*
- **Bold (including bold italics and bold ALL CAPS) shows what appears in the student outline.**
- Regular text is used for lecture notes; ALL CAPS are used for emphasis.

Overview

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Give students 15 minutes to complete Quiz 1.

Remind students to keep working on their Church Visitation Assignment.

Introduction

Since the focus of Christianity is on Christ, the Christian worker must have a clear understanding of his person and work.

Christology: *the study of Jesus' person.* Not to be confused with Soteriology, the study of Jesus' work. Soteriology focuses on HOW Jesus provided salvation for us (weeks 5-7 of this course).

Who was Jesus?

The identity of Jesus is a common theme in spiritual conversations. Are you ready to respond to the wide range of views that people have? In your conversations with non-Christians, what have you heard them say about who Jesus is?

The word on the street –

- **“Jesus, like Buddha, Confucius, and Mohammed, was one of the great spiritual teachers of mankind.”**
- **“We have no idea who the real Jesus was, what he taught, or whether he even actually existed!”**
- **“Jesus never claimed to be God. The early church added this teaching decades after his death.”**
- **“Jesus was a man whom God elevated to divine status because of his obedience.”**

Mormonism – Jesus was God's firstborn creation, the brother of Lucifer.

Jehovah's Witnesses – Jesus was created by God and existed as the archangel Michael before taking human form. He did not raise bodily from the dead.

DaVinci Code – The real Jesus was very different from the account given in the New Testament. The truth was suppressed by the Church elite.

The “Historical Jesus” – Jesus wasn't really a miracle worker. The so-called "quest for the historical Jesus" was an attempt by liberal theologians to discover what Jesus was actually like. Because of their *a priori* rejection of miracles, the expectation of their inquiry was that the real Jesus would prove to be different than the Jesus portrayed in scripture:

" ... the earthly Jesus was depicted as basically a good man, a teacher of great spiritual truths, but not the miracle-working, preexistent Second Person of the Trinity."¹

Attempts to separate the Jesus of history from the miracle-working so-called Christ of faith proved futile.

¹ Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), p. 663.

Neo Orthodoxy – Jesus was not God in any literal sense but can lead us to God through his example. As a rule, liberal (and some neo-orthodox) theologians also deny Christ's deity. Fundamentalists, reacting against this heresy, sometimes underemphasize his humanity.

Why do we need an accurate understanding of who Jesus is?

Christ provides the way of salvation, so...

- **Misunderstanding who Jesus is leads to *confusion about how to be saved!***

In other words, Christology, the study of Jesus' person, is related to Soteriology, the study of his work. WHO Jesus is will determine WHAT he is able to do.

e.g. Virtually all of the heresies above deny deity of Christ and therefore also deny to some extent his work on the cross for us.

This week we will survey what the New Testament says about Jesus, introduce important terms that help describe him, and look at important events and roles in his ministry as savior. Let's start by looking at 3 key passages that provide a clear picture of who Jesus is.

Three Key Passages on Christology: John 1:1-18; Hebrews 1; Philippians 2:1-11

John 1:1-18

Who is 'the Word'? Discussion: Ask students to review the passage and note anything it says about the Word.

- The Word is God. (v. 1)
- The Word "became flesh." (v. 14)
- The Word is Jesus Christ. (v. 17)

This passage is describing an event that theologians call...

The Incarnation: The point in history when the second person of the Trinity *entered the human race.*

(John 1:14) "And the word became flesh and dwelt among us."

Incarnation literally means "enfleshment."

At the incarnation, two natures were inseparably united in one person, Jesus Christ. Theologians call this the...

Hypostatic Union: At the Incarnation, two *NATURES* (full deity and full humanity), were inseparably united in one *PERSON* (Jesus Christ).

Compare John 1:1 & 14

Verse 1 stresses the eternity, distinct personality and deity of Jesus. Verse 14 emphasizes his entry into the human race: he "became flesh." Jesus has always been fully God and yet is fully human.

(Colossians 2:9*) For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form . .

Colossians 2:9 clearly teaches that Jesus is one person with two natures. Arguing against Gnostic false teachers who denied Jesus' deity and (probably) fleshly body, Paul insists that "in him dwells the fullness of DEITY in BODILY FORM."

Discussion: How is the concept of "Hypostatic Union" different from "the Trinity?"

The Trinity: *THREE PERSONS who share ONE ESSENCE.*

Hypostatic union: *ONE PERSON who has TWO NATURES.*

Additional support for the Hypostatic Union

Full Humanity:

It may be more common today to hear people denying the deity of Christ, but many times throughout history believers have been faced with the denial that Jesus was truly human.

e.g. Docetists denied that Jesus had a physical body because they thought matter was inherently evil. Their name comes from the Greek verb "dokeo" which means appear – Jesus "appeared" to have a physical body, but did not.

e.g. This is the false teaching John was confronting while writing 1 John – see 1 John 1:1.

The Bible clearly teaches that Jesus was fully human:

(1 Tim. 2:5) For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus . . .

(Heb. 2:14, 17) Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil . . . (17) Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

(1 John 4:2) By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God . . .

(2 John 7) Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world.

IMPORTANCE: Jesus had to be human *to pay for human sin*. He had to be human in order to die and be a true mediator-priest who could represent humanity before God (Heb. 2:17,18).

(Heb. 10:4-7) . . .because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. (5) Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, *but a body you prepared for me*; (6) with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. (7) Then I said, 'Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll— I have come to do your will, O God.'"

Jesus also had to be human in order to be the Second Adam and the inaugurator of a new humanity (Rom. 5:12-19).

Sinless Humanity:

(2 Cor. 5:21) He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

(Heb. 4:15) For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.

(1 John 3:5) And you know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin.

IMPORTANCE: Jesus had to be sinless to be an acceptable sacrifice.

Although Jesus did not have a sin-nature, the Bible does not emphasize this or explain how he avoided this. Instead, it emphasizes his sinlessness, because Jesus had to be morally blameless in order to be able to die for others (Hebrews 7:26-28; 9:14).

Could Jesus fall to temptation?

Reformed syllogism: God can't be tempted (Jas 1:13). Jesus is God (Col 2:9). Therefore, Jesus could not sin (impeccability).²

However, Jesus was also human and humans can be tempted. Jesus was tempted (Mt. 4) like we are (Heb 2:18; 4:15,16), yet without sin. These biblical accounts that he successfully overcame temptation and that we can go to him for help in overcoming temptation strongly imply that these temptations were real in the sense that Jesus could have fallen to them.

Did Jesus have a sin nature?

Scripture does not answer this question directly. However, it infers that Jesus did not have a sin-nature.

- In Rom. 8:3, Paul stops short of affirming that Jesus had "sinful flesh"—he says Jesus "came in the likeness of sinful flesh."
- Rom. 5:12-19 provides two important reasons why Jesus did not inherit the full effects of Adam.
 - First: He is the "second Adam" (vs 14). This would suggest that, like Adam before the Fall, Jesus made his choice to obey God without a sin-nature.
 - Second: Vs 16,18 also say that those "in Adam" are born under condemnation—which clearly was not the case with Jesus (Matt. 3:17).

Objection: "Then Jesus didn't agonize as much as we do!"

² The view that Christ could have sinned is known as peccability (Latin: potuit non peccare, "able not to sin,") while the view that Christ could not have sinned is called impeccability (Latin: non potuit peccare, "not able to sin"). See an argument for impeccability in Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1941), p. 318.

- Only those who successfully resist temptation feel its full weight.
- A lot more was at stake for Jesus (the salvation of humanity), and he undoubtedly experienced a greater frequency and degree of temptation than we do.

Full Deity: (see also John 10:30; 14:9; Romans 9:5, Colossians 2:9; John 1:1)

We won't find Jesus in the Gospels making the statement, "I am God come in the flesh." However, the implications of what he said and did were clear to his audience...

- **Jesus' claims and the response to Jesus' claims**

**CLAIM: (John 5:17) But He answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working."
RESPONSE: (John 5:18) For this cause therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.**

**CLAIM: (John 8:58) Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am."
RESPONSE: (John 8:59) Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple.**

**CLAIM: (John 10:30) "I and the Father are one."
RESPONSE: (John 10:31) The Jews took up stones again to stone Him.**

In the passages above, Jesus makes these claims to a strictly monotheistic audience. They would have understood him to be claiming to be the one true God. Also, when his audience objected or tried to stone him for blasphemy, Jesus never tries to correct their misunderstanding of his claims.

- **The apostolic witness**

Hebrews 1

Instructors: Ask students to read Hebrews 1 and note what it says about who Jesus is. For example:

- Jesus is "the heir of all things." (1:2)

- God made the world through Jesus (1:2).
- Jesus is the radiance of God's glory (1:3).
- Jesus is the "exact representation of God's nature" (1:3).
- Jesus is "greater than the angels" (1:4).

(Heb. 1:8, 10) "But of the Son He says...
...your throne, O God, is forever and
ever..." (1:8)
"And you, Lord, in the beginning laid the
foundation of the earth..." (1:10)**

- *Jesus is God* (1:8-12).

In vs. 8, he quotes Ps. 45:6,7 which clearly describes the Messiah as elevated above "his companions" (the angels). In vs. 10, he quotes Ps. 102:25, which is addressed to YHWH (Ps. 102:22). Therefore, the author clearly states that Jesus is YHWH.

Paul

Paul affirmed Jesus' deity, especially in **Colossians 2:9*** (see above) and **Philippians 2:6** (see below).

IMPORTANCE: Jesus had to be God to pay for the sins of all humanity in a finite amount of time.

Because Jesus is God, he was able to pay for an infinite amount of sin and endure God's infinite wrath against sin in a finite amount of time.

(Hebrews 10:10-12) And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (11) Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. (12) But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.

See also Col. 2:9-15. Here Paul connects his assertion of Jesus' deity to his ability to provide a full salvation, including forgiveness of all sins.

Other implications of Jesus divinity:

- Because Jesus is God, *he is able to reveal God to us* in the fullest way that we can comprehend (John 1:18; 14:9; Hebrews 1:1-3).
- *Jesus is in a different category than other great spiritual teachers of history*, few of whom even claimed to be divine. We should heed his words (Hebrews 2:1-4).

Summary:

- **Jesus had to be HUMAN to pay for human sin.**
- **Jesus had to be SINLESS to be an acceptable sacrifice.**
- **Jesus had to be GOD to pay for an infinite amount of sin in a finite amount of time.**

Philippians 2:1-11

Now that we've established that Jesus was both fully human and fully divine, let's consider two questions raised by the doctrine of Jesus' divinity:

“How is it that Jesus displayed certain limitations if he was fully God?”

“How can I follow Jesus' example? He faced life's struggles with divine powers that the rest of us don't have.”

Instructors read Philippians 2:1-11 with students.

Discussion: How does this passage shed light on these questions?

Theologians use the term “kenosis” to describe what happened to Jesus at the incarnation.

Kenosis: At the Incarnation, Jesus gave up not only the *ENVIRONMENT* of the Godhead and his position as *RULER*, but also the *USE* of his divine attributes.

The term kenosis is related to the Greek verb used in verse 7: “he emptied (Greek: kenow) himself.” It means “to lay aside or empty.”

Let's look more closely at the ways Jesus emptied himself.

- **He gave up a perfect ENVIRONMENT.**

(John 1:1,14) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . (14) And the Word became flesh . . .

The emphasis here is on Jesus exchanging his perfect environment of being with God (the Father) in order to enter the environment of fallen and sinful humanity to be our Savior.

- **He gave up his position as RULER.**

(Phil. 2:6,7*) . . . who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, (7) but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.

Phil. 2:6,7* states that Jesus did not "hold on to" (*harpagmos*) his equality with God. The context emphasizes that he relinquished his position as Ruler, and exchanged it for one of a servant.

- **He laid aside the USE of his divine attributes.**

“By taking on human nature, (Jesus) accepted certain limitations upon the functioning of his divine attributes. These limitations were *NOT THE RESULT OF A LOSS OF DIVINE ATTRIBUTES*, but of the addition of human attributes.”³

Examples:⁴

- OLYMPIC SPRINTER IN 3-LEGGED RACE
- CHAMPION BOXER FIGHTING WITH ONE HAND TIED BEHIND HIS BACK
- PARENTS BATTING "LEFT-HANDED" AGAINST KIDS

On the exam, you will be asked to provide this definition. We'll be looking for mention of giving up his perfect ENVIRONMENT, giving up his position as RULER, and laying aside the USE of his divine attributes. If you fail to say "USE," you are using heretical language (ask students to explain why) and your answer will be counted as wrong!!!

³ Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985) p. 735.

⁴ Examples adapted from Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985) p. 735-736.

Jesus demonstrated non-use of:

Omniscience

(Matt. 24:36) "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone."

(Luke 2:52) And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

Omnipotence

(Mark 6:5) And He could do no miracle there except that He laid His hands upon a few sick people and healed them.

(John 5:19) Jesus therefore answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner."

Omnipresence

(John 4:4) "And He had to pass through Samaria."

Righteousness

(Hebrews 9:14) "...how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God."

Justice

(John 5:30) "I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."

Self existence

Luke 4:2 – Jesus began to starve at the end of his 40 day temptation.

It is possible that Jesus exercised his infinitude while on the cross, so as to bear the infinite wrath of God in a finite period of time.

“How then did Jesus perform miracles?”

In John 5:19, Jesus states that he "can do nothing of himself." As we review his 3-year ministry, we see Jesus depending on the Father's power for everything he did. In Luke 4:18, for example, Jesus declares that the anointing of the Holy Spirit empowers his public ministry.

(Luke 4:18) "THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE DOWNTRODDEN . . .

Luke and the other Gospel writers frequently remind readers that the Father empowered Jesus' ministry:

(Luke 5:17) “And it came about one day that He was teaching; and there were some Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem; and the power of *the Lord* was present for him to heal.”

Peter, in summarizing the entire miracle ministry of Jesus, states that God empowered him through the Holy Spirit:

(Acts 2:22) "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know . . . "

(Acts 10:38) "You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed by the devil; for God was with Him . . . "

This also explains how Jesus was able to avoid falling into temptation

Christ did not breeze through episodes of temptation. Because he had 'emptied himself' and was living as a human being, the temptations were real and were overcome through dependence on God's Spirit.

NOTE: *We are not saying that Jesus never performed a miracle by his own authority or power* (see Mark 1:23-27; Luke 8:24). If he did, the Father certainly gave him authorization to do so (John 5:19).

Practical implications of the kenosis:

- *Like Jesus, WE should depend on the power of the Holy Spirit*

Jesus, although fully God, lived his earthly life as all human beings are called to – in dependence on the Holy Spirit.

(John 14:10, 12, 16-17) "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works . . . (12) Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to the Father . . . (16) And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; (17) that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you."

Jesus states that "the Father abiding in me does his works" (vs 10). He also tells his disciples that they will be able to perform the same works that he has performed because they will receive the same source of empowering—the Holy Spirit (vs 12-17).

Notice that in Phil. 2:1-11, Paul applies this not to performing miracles, but to depending on God to live a life of other-centered, sacrificial love. Like Jesus, we have access to God's motivation and empowering to love others. Depending on God's power as we engage in this kind of serving love is emphasized throughout the New Testament epistles.

- *Jesus loves us very much to give up these prerogatives to be our Savior.*

Between Death & Resurrection

Explanation: *Between his death and resurrection, Jesus did not "descend into hell" as some creeds teach. He presented his sacrifice to the Father (Heb. 9:11,12), and also may have visited some portions of the underworld.*

Support:

(Heb. 9:11,12) But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; (12) and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.

There is no specific time indicator in this passage. We infer that this happened after his death and before his resurrection, in part because he could not have been resurrected his sacrifice had not been accepted.

(1 Pet. 3:18-20) For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; (19) in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison, (20) who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water.

1 Pet. 3:18-20 may teach that Jesus proclaimed defeat and judgment to either the unbelievers of Noah's day, or to the demons who were imprisoned after their disobedience in Gen. 6:2-4 (see also Jude 1:6-8; 2 Pet. 2:4; Rev. 9:1-11?). The phrase "in spirit" may indicate that Jesus did not do this "in body"—which would point to this period.

(1 Pet. 4:6) For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God.

1 Pet. 4:6 may teach that Jesus visited "Abraham's bosom" and announced to Old Testament believers that the penalty for their sins had been paid. He probably took them at this time to God's presence. Eph. 4:9 may also refer to the same event.

NOTE: The meaning of the above passages are not very clear, and no other essential doctrines are based on these claims. Therefore, *avoid dogmatism on this issue.*

Resurrection

Instructors read **1 Corinthians 15:1-19.**

Paul says belief in the actual, bodily resurrection of Christ is non-negotiable and crucial to our faith.

Discussion: Ask students draw a definition of resurrection from the text and to list reasons why belief in the resurrection is a non-optional component of our faith.

Definition: *Christ rose bodily from the dead, resulting in an empty grave.*

The Bible teaches that while Christ's resurrected body was in some ways different (appeared and disappeared, changed appearance, ascended, etc.), it was corporal and similar to his pre-death body (Luke 24:39). Therefore, the beliefs that Jesus' resurrected body was completely different than his previous body, or that the resurrection was only spiritual, or that it was only the imagination of the apostles are unacceptable.

Importance:

- **It validates the *AUTHORITY AND TRUTHFULNESS* of Jesus and his message.** Jesus made a unique claim for himself (that he was the Messiah), and he offered to provide unique evidence for those claims (that he would be resurrected). If Jesus was not raised from the dead, he was a false messiah, the apostles were liars, and Christians are fools to be pitied. See also...

(John 2:18-22) Then the Jews demanded of him, "What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?" (19) Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." (20) The Jews replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are

going to raise it in three days?" (21) But the temple he had spoken of was his body. (22) After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

(Matt. 12:38-40) Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, "Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from you." (39) He answered, "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. (40) For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

The phrase "three days and three nights" is a common Jewish figure of speech meaning "spanning three calendar days." It is a common feature of biblical chronology that "the part equals the whole." cf. Acts 19:10; 20:31

(Rom. 1:4) ... who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord . . .

(1 Cor. 15:14) ... and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain.

- **It demonstrates that *GOD ACCEPTED* Jesus' atoning sacrifice.** In the Old Testament, the fact that the High Priest emerged alive from the Holy of Holies demonstrated that the sacrifice had been accepted by God. If his sacrifice had been unacceptable, he would have been killed (Lev. 16:1,2). In the same way, Jesus' resurrection demonstrated that his death was fully accepted by the Father as payment for our sins. See also...

(1 Cor. 15:17) . . . and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.

(Rom. 4:25) He who was delivered up because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.

See also **1 Peter 1:3.**

- **It guarantees the believer's *FUTURE RESURRECTION*.** Paul refers to Jesus' resurrection as the "first fruits" (vs. 20,23). This is a reference to the Old Testament festival of First Fruits. The earliest fruits were tangible evidence that God would grant them a full harvest. In the

same way, Paul says that Jesus' resurrection is the tangible evidence that we will be resurrected at his coming (the Rapture).

(1 Cor. 15:18-23) Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. (19) If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied. (20) But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. (21) For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. (22) For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. (23) But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming.

- **It assures the believer's *POSITION IN CHRIST*.** Paul argues that Christians have been freed from the authority of sin and Satan. This is because Jesus overcame both of them through his death and resurrection, and we have been united with him in his resurrection. Obviously, if Jesus was not resurrected, Christians have no authority over sin or Satan.

(Romans 6:4,5) Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. (5) For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection . . .

Because we participated in Christ's resurrection, Christians can walk in "newness" of life. We have been made spiritually alive and freed from sin.

(Eph 1:20,21; 2:6) ... which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, (21) far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come . . .(6) and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus ...

Prior to knowing God, Christians were under the authority of Satan (Ephesians 2:1-3). But now we have been raised with him and seated with him above all rule and authority... including Satan's authority. Since we're in Christ and seated with him, we are no longer under Satan's authority.

Support:

The Apostles received empirical proof of Christ's resurrection

While we obviously do not possess empirical proof (evidence from observation through our five senses) for Jesus' resurrection, the apostles did receive this kind of proof (Acts 1:3; 1 John 1:1; John 20:25,27), and Jesus states that their witness is an adequate basis for our faith (John 20:29; Acts 17:31).

(Acts 1:3) To these He also presented Himself alive, after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days, and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God.

(1 John 1:1) What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life—

(John 20: 25, 27, 29) So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it.” . . .27 Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” . . . 29 Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

See also Acts 17:31

Positive evidence for Christ's resurrection:⁵

Aside from the testimony of the apostles, there is a wealth of historical evidence for the resurrection. This evidence is forensic – the kind of evidence used in a court of law. We can conclude by several lines of reasoning based on the data available to us that the best explanation for what happened is that Jesus rose from the dead.

- **The Christian movement began in the very city where its founder had been executed and buried only days earlier.**

This movement was based solely on the apostles' claim (along with 500 other people—see 1 Cor. 15:6) that they had witnessed Jesus alive after his execution. The leaders of the

⁵ For more information on this topic, see Lee Strobel, *The Case For Christ: A Journalist's Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus* (Zondervan, 1998).

city (both Jewish and Roman) were hostile to this movement, and could have easily refuted this claim by exhuming the body. The best explanation for this historical fact is that the tomb was indeed empty and that the witnesses were telling the truth. "If the birth of Christianity leaves a hole in history the size of Jesus' resurrection, with what do you propose to fill it?"

- **With the possible exception of John, the apostles were all executed rather than retract their claims that they had witnessed Jesus alive after his execution.**

It is difficult to believe that they would all have done this if they knew were lying. Chuck Colson points out that all of those involved in the Watergate cover-up spoke up as soon as they were threatened with imprisonment. How much more would at least some of the apostles have broken ranks if they knew they were lying about Jesus' resurrection?

- **The conversion of Paul is difficult to explain apart from his own explanation.**

He was a leading enemy of the Christian movement, completely indisposed to believe that Jesus was the Messiah. Yet, in a very short period of time, he converted to belief in Jesus and became Christianity's most eloquent and adamant proponent. Attempts to explain Paul's conversion apart from Christ's appearance (guilt complex; epileptic seizures; etc.) are inadequate.

Inadequate explanations:

Theories that deny the resurrection are inadequate because they fail to provide a plausible explanation for what happened.

- **Stolen Body Theory:** Someone stole the body, which explains the disciples' belief in the resurrection as well as the empty tomb.

Refutation: *Who would steal it?* The Romans and the Jews would want Christ to be provably dead. A practical jokester wouldn't risk death. The disciples wouldn't be martyred for what they knew to be a lie.

- **Swoon Theory:** Jesus didn't really die. He was given a drug while on the cross which simulated death, and later recovered,

revealed himself to his disciples as resurrected, and then lived out the rest of his life in hiding.

Refutation: *Jesus would not have had the strength to leave the tomb.* After hanging on a cross for several hours, being pierced in his side and wrapped mummy-style, how did he break the burial linen, roll the stone away, overpower the guards, and after crawling to the upper room (on his elbows and knees), succeed in convincing his disciples that he was resurrected?

- **Hallucination Theory:** The disciples didn't really see Jesus rise from the dead. They hallucinated seeing him, because they wanted so badly for him to be alive.

Refutation: *This still doesn't deal with the empty tomb.* Evidence for the existence of mass hallucinations under any circumstances is lacking. In addition, his disciples sometimes didn't even recognize him at first (Lk. 24:16,31). Jesus went out of his way to make sure they knew he wasn't a spirit or hallucination (Jn. 20:25,27; Lk. 24:36-43). Neither were they necessarily inclined to look for a resurrection (Lk. 24:11).

- **Legend Theory:** The story of the resurrection is not factual, but reflects a legend which the early church came to believe.

Refutation: The gospels and epistles have been accurately dated to 50-95 AD. There was not enough time for such a false legend to arise, since eyewitnesses could easily discredit it. Also, this does not explain why the disciples were willing to die for their message when they knew full well that it was a lie.

Ascension

Definition: After his resurrection, *Jesus was removed bodily from earth* and (until his return) is in the presence of God the Father.

(Acts 1:9-11) And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. (10) And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was departing, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them; (11) and they also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."

Purpose:

- *Jesus went to prepare a place for believers.*

(John 14:2,3) "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. (3) And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."

- **Jesus went to be "glorified" which allowed *the Holy Spirit to be sent to the church*.** The exact meaning of this term is unclear, but it may refer to the fact that he is now in a position of authority.

(John 16:7) But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.

(John 7:38,39) "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.'" (39) But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Session – Where is Christ now? What is He doing?

Definition: *Christ sits at the right hand of God* (Colossians 3:1), interceding for believers and guiding the church as its head during the present age.

Purpose:

- **Jesus *MEDIATES* between us and the Father.** Jesus continues to apply his finished work as the basis for God's acceptance of believers.

(Hebrews 7:25) Hence, also, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

(Rom. 8:34) who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

(1 John 2:1,2) My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; (2) and

He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.

- **Jesus RULES the church.** He is the living Head of his Body, who has authority to sovereignly work through history to open doors for the gospel (Rev. 3:7,8), lead and guide believers in this task, etc.

(Eph. 1:20-23) . . . which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, (21) far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come. (22) And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, (23) which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

(Rev. 3:7,8) "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this: (8) 'I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name.'"

Second Advent

Definition: *Christ will physically return to earth to rule*, descending bodily from the sky (Acts 1:9-11; Matt. 24:27-31; Rev. 19:11-21).

Purpose:

- **To take over the world and rule it as king for a thousand years** (Rev. 19:11-20:10).
- **To reward the members of the church for their deeds done in the body** (2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Cor. 3:10-15).

Note: This may occur immediately after the Rapture instead of after the Second Advent.

Essential vs. Non-essential

Discussion: Based on what we've covered so far, which of the following would you categorize as essential (define) for biblical faith, and which are non-essential?

Essential

Non-essential

Jesus' sinlessness
Jesus' work in between death and resurrection
Jesus' humanity
Jesus' deity
Jesus bodily resurrection
Jesus could have fallen into sin
Jesus will return one day to rule the earth
Jesus was born without a sin nature

Jesus' humanity, deity and resurrection are essential because scripture says they are (see 1 Jn. 2:22,23; 4:2,3,14,15; 5:1; 2 Jn. 1:7; 1 Cor. 15:12-34; Rom. 10:9).

His sinlessness and return are essential because they have direct bearing on salvation. The New Testament is clear and dogmatic on these issues for this reason.

Issues like whether Jesus went to Hades, whether he had a sin-nature, whether he exercises all his divine attributes now, whether he will forever remain incarnate, etc. are not emphasized by the New Testament and therefore should be viewed as non-essential.

Memory Verses

Colossians 2:9* – Clearest biblical affirmation of the hypostatic union

Philippians 2:6,7* – Jesus laid aside the USE of certain divine attributes at the incarnation.

Hebrews 1:8-10 – Jesus is God**

Assignment

- Complete the *Genesis 3-11 Assignment*.