

Lesson 3

Christ: The Visible Expression of the Invisible God

“He is the very image of his father.” Have you heard someone say this about a young boy? Sometimes we ask ourselves, “Just how are the two alike?” If a father and son *look* alike, we can see this easily, but sometimes the similarity is not so clear. For example, they may be alike in their actions or in their way of thinking, or their personalities may be much the same. By watching the child, you can see in many ways what his father is like.

Jesus came into the world to show us what God the Father is like. He is the visible representation of the Father, who is invisible. Jesus embodies the natural and moral characteristics of God. Through the miracle of the incarnation, He took upon Himself the nature and form of man. In doing this, He gave expression to the qualities of God and communicated these qualities to man. Jesus said, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9).

In this lesson we will consider the doctrine concerning Jesus Christ, who “is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being” (Hebrews 1:3). As we think of the time He spent on earth and how He reflected the Father, may we earnestly pray that, in the same way, we may reflect the beauty of the Son to others.



lesson outline

The Humanity of Christ

The Deity of Christ

The Union of Deity and Humanity in Christ

The Works of Christ

lesson objectives

When you finish this lesson you should be able to:

- Give biblical evidence for the deity and humanity of Christ.
- Discuss the nature and purpose of the incarnation.
- Identify the works of Christ and their significance.
- Love Christ more as a result of knowing more about Him.

learning activities

1. Study the lesson development according to the procedures outlined in Lessons 1 and 2.

2. Be sure to write your own responses to the study questions before looking ahead to the answers which are given at the end of the lesson. Review any exercises you answer incorrectly. Then take the self-test and check your answers.

key words

ancestry	humanity	penalty
ascension	incarnation	reconciliation
deity	intercessor	redemption
distinctive	lineage	representative
exaltation	mediator	subjected
extraordinary	mortal	supernatural

lesson development

THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST

Objective 1. *Match evidences of Jesus' humanity with descriptions of each.*

Among all the distinctive elements of the Christian faith, the *incarnation* of our Lord Jesus Christ is without question the most basic. *Incarnation* refers to the union of deity with humanity in Jesus Christ. That He, the eternal Son of God, became man for the purpose of saving us is the clear teaching of Scripture. God acted in a completely new way in the world when His Son became "flesh." Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit in the Virgin Mary. In this unique, creative act, God broke through the chain of human generation and brought forth a supernatural being.

The mystery which surrounds this miraculous event fades somewhat when we realize that it was part of a new activity of God. The Son of God came to deliver man, a flesh-and-blood creature, by Himself becoming flesh and blood. He did this in order to provide for man's salvation by His own death. With the incarnation God set in motion His plan of redemption on earth: "But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman" (Galatians 4:4). There was no other way for Him to accomplish His saving purpose.

The incarnation, therefore, was a turning point for sinful man, for it made possible a reconciliation (bringing together again) between God and man. Since Jesus' humanity has such significance in God's plan of salvation, it is important that we consider some evidences of His humanity. They include His human ancestry, human development, human appearance, human limitations, and human names.

Human Ancestry and Development

Two Gospel writers, Matthew and Luke, trace the human ancestry of Christ. Matthew, in fact, traces His lineage all the way back to David, and even further, to Abraham the Patriarch (Matthew 1:1-17). His two objectives were:

1. To prove that Jesus was from the line of David, and therefore heir to the throne of Israel. Otherwise, no Jew would accept Him as his King or Messiah.
2. To prove that Jesus, as the seed of Abraham, was the child of promise through whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed (see Genesis 22:17-18).

Luke traces Jesus' lineage back to Adam, the first man (Luke 3:23-38). However, the purpose of both Matthew and Luke was to emphasize the fact of Jesus' human experience: He was born of a woman (Galatians 4:4).

While we say that Jesus had a human ancestry, we must be careful to point out that He did not have a natural human father. His birth was different from all other human births. Luke records the scene in which the angel told Mary that she would soon be pregnant. Her immediate reaction was: "How will this be...since I am a virgin?" (Luke 1:34). To her question concerning the miraculous birth of Jesus, which presented a seemingly impossible situation, the angel reminded Mary that "nothing is impossible with God" (vs. 37). Jesus' birth was wonderfully miraculous; yet it was a *human* birth.

Jesus developed physically and mentally according to ordinary laws of human growth. In fact, His growth and

development as a normal member of the community of Nazareth was accepted by His fellow townsmen (Matthew 13:55). Luke says that Jesus “grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him” (Luke 2:40). We know that His mental development was not the result of instruction He received in the schools of His day (John 7:15). Rather, it was the result of training He received from godly parents, regular attendance at the synagogue (Luke 4:16), faithful visits to the temple (Luke 2:41), faithful study and application of the Scriptures, and prayer (Mark 1:35, John 4:32-34).

1 Read Luke 2:52. This verse suggests that Jesus’ life developed

- a** intellectually.
- b** spiritually.
- c** physically.
- d** socially.

Human Appearance and Limitations

All the evidence indicates that Jesus’ physical appearance was similar to that of other men. In fact, He was so like other men in their daily activities that when He claimed to be one with the Father, His hearers became very angry. They responded hotly that He was “a mere man” and therefore had no right to claim to be God (John 10:33).

As the Roman governor, Pilate, presented Jesus to the Jews before pronouncing sentence upon Him. He declared, “Here is the man” (John 19:5). As Jesus stood condemned before the Roman judge, no one questioned His humanity. The apostle Paul later testified to the world of the first century that Christ Jesus was “found in appearance as a man” (Philippians 2:8).

None of Jesus’ close companions ever doubted that He was a man. More often they were impressed with the fact that He was an extraordinary man: “Who is this? Even the wind and waves obey him” (Mark 4:41).

When Jesus took the form of man, He willingly subjected Himself to the limitations of humanity. As a result, He, too, at times became physically tired (John 4:6), hungry (Mark 11:12), and thirsty (John 19:28). He underwent temptation (Matthew 4:1-11) and was strengthened by the Father as He prayed (Luke 22:42-44). He also experienced pain (1 Peter 4:1) and finally death (1 Corinthians 15:3). This was the greatest proof of the limitation which His humanity placed upon Him.

Human Names

The names given to Jesus indicate His humanity also. When the angel told Joseph about the coming child, he commanded Joseph to name the baby *Jesus*, which is simply the Greek form of the Old Testament name *Joshua* (Matthew 1:21) meaning “Savior.” He was also called the “son of David,” and the “son of Abraham” (Matthew 1:1). But the name often applied to Him in Scripture of which He seemed most fond, *Son of Man*, is the one which most clearly represents His humanity. Jesus used this name when speaking of Himself (Matthew 26:64-65). You will note, however, that He did not claim to be simply *a* son of man, but *the* Son of Man. This term not only implies that He is truly human, but also that He is the representative of all mankind.

2 Read Luke 2:40,51; 8:19-21; and John 7:1-8. Based upon these Scriptures, circle the letter preceding each TRUE statement.

- a** Jesus went through the normal childhood growth and development stages, showing progress physically, mentally, and spiritually.
- b** Although He displayed unusual qualities as a boy, Jesus was still under the leadership of His parents.
- c** When Jesus became the center of attention as He taught, His family fully understood His mission and made no demands on Him.
- d** Jesus’ brothers were convinced by His mighty works that He was more than an ordinary man, and they approved of His public ministry.

3 Match each evidence of Jesus' humanity (right) with its description (left).

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|--|----------------------|
| a Jesus experienced weariness, hunger, thirst, pain, and finally death. | 1) Human ancestry |
| b Jesus was called by the Greek form of the Old Testament <i>Joshua</i> , as well as other titles. | 2) Human development |
| c Biblical writers trace Jesus' lineage to David, Abraham, and Adam. | 3) Human appearance |
| d The Roman governor who passed sentence on Jesus identified Him by saying, "Here is the man" (John 19:5). | 4) Human limitations |
| e Jesus demonstrated mental, physical, spiritual, and social progress. | 5) Human names |

THE DEITY OF CHRIST

Objective 2. *Select statements that support the deity of Jesus.*

We have examined scriptural evidence for the humanity of Christ, and we have seen that this evidence is conclusive. We now consider the biblical facts concerning the deity of Christ and the importance of this aspect of His Being.

Divine Rights

The first line of evidence we will consider for the deity of Christ is that *He exercised divine rights that only God has*. The divine rights include *receiving the worship of men, forgiving sin, raising the dead, and the right to judge*.

Since God had forbidden the worship of any other god in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:3-5), this would have been an act of blasphemy if Jesus were not truly divine. (*Blasphemy* is insulting God, or claiming wrongly to be divine.) When Jesus was tested by the devil, He reaffirmed the commandment to worship the Lord and serve Him only (Matthew 4:10). Yet He claimed His right to receive worship.

The Bible reveals that when people in ignorance tried to worship the apostles, these men of God strongly refused to accept their worship (Acts 10:25-26; 14:11-18). Even holy angels refuse worship which is misdirected to them (Revelation 19:10; 22:8-9). While the apostles, who were ordinary men, and mighty angels refused worship, Jesus accepted it as His right. He claimed that to honor Him was the obligation of all people (John 5:23).

Secondly, we see that Jesus exercised His right to forgive sin, a right reserved for God alone (Mark 2:7). Jesus did not hesitate to exercise this right, even though His enemies were very upset about it (Matthew 9:2-6).

Jesus also exercised the right of giving life (John 5:21; 10:10). On at least three occasions, Jesus raised dead people to life (Luke 7:11-17; 8:40-56; John 11:1-44). In the future, all those who have died will be raised to life by His powerful word (John 5:21-30). Obviously, the right to give life is something that mere man cannot do by his own power.

A fourth example of Jesus exercising divine rights is His right to judge: “Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son” (John 5:22). The following Scriptures give more insight into the scope of His right of judgment: Matthew 25:31-46; Acts 10:42; 17:31; and 2 Corinthians 5:10.

Jesus exercised all of these rights, and others, with no hesitation. To have done so without being God would have been presumption (going beyond what is right) and blasphemy.

4 List from memory things Jesus did during His life on earth which show that He exercised divine rights. Use your notebook.

Divine Character

Objective 3. *List the moral and natural attributes that identified Jesus as God.*

Moral Attributes

Jesus’ character amazed people. They marveled at His behavior and attitude under all kinds of circumstances. His responses to

situations in life revealed clearly that He was different. He possessed the same moral and natural attributes as God the Father.

Jesus lived a life of such remarkable *holiness* that one of those closest to Him declared that “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth” (1 Peter 2:22). His enemies could not prove Him guilty of sin, because He was sinless (John 8:46). No mere human being is capable of this level of conduct, but Jesus was more than a human being.

His *love* also set Jesus apart from ordinary men. He proved His love in relationships with people from all walks of life and all levels of society (Luke 19:10; compare also Matthew 11:19 with Mark 10:17-22). He prayed for His followers and He prayed for His enemies also (John 17:9,20; Luke 23:34). This perfect quality of His love revealed that He was the Son of God.

Jesus’ love was demonstrated in many ways. He displayed genuine humility and meekness. When He entered His public ministry, He was motivated by the desire to serve (Matthew 20:28). As Master and Teacher, He illustrated the true meaning of service as He washed His students’ feet (John 13:14). He was gentle with the sinful (Luke 7:37-39, 44-50), the doubting (John 20:29), and those who had forsaken Him (Luke 22:61; John 21:15-23). In love He demonstrated the very principles He taught! No ordinary human being has lived a life so filled with love.

His love was most clearly revealed by His love for God the Father. He showed by His own example that the secret of an effective spiritual life depends on a close relationship with God. No ordinary human being could pray as He did. He prayed intensely (Luke 22:39-44), regularly, and for long periods of time. Sometimes He prayed all night. At other times He arose very early in the morning to pray (Mark 1:35). He left a perfect example of the pattern for maintaining and developing our spiritual lives (1 Peter 2:21).

No one who was close to Jesus could doubt His humanity. Neither could one compare His perfection with an ordinary man’s best efforts. The perfect example of holiness and love, Jesus was, in Peter’s words, “The Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16).

5 In your notebook, state ways Jesus revealed His holiness and love.

Natural Attributes

Paul declares that Jesus Christ is the power and wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:24) and that God is pleased to have all His fullness dwell in the Son (Colossians 1:19; 2:9). Matthew concludes his Gospel record with these words of Jesus: “All authority (power) in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Matthew 28:18). These Scriptures reveal that Jesus, the second Person of the Trinity, is *omnipotent*. All angels, authorities, and powers of the universe are subject to His power and authority (1 Peter 3:22).

The Bible also teaches that Jesus is *omnipresent* (everywhere-present). Paul says that God the Father has placed all things under the Son, and that the Son “fills everything in every way” (Ephesians 1:22-23). What an encouragement for us to remember that He will keep His promise to be with us when only a few of us meet to worship Him (Matthew 18:20). Even though sometimes we may not feel His presence, we can be sure He is with us at all times!

Jesus Christ is also *omniscient*—He knows everything (John 2:24-25; 16:30; 21:17). Paul refers to the mystery of God, which he says is *Christ*, “in whom are hidden *all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*” (Colossians 2:2-3, italics mine). He knew of the sinful life of the Samaritan woman (John 4), the thoughts of the Pharisees (Luke 6:8), how and when He would leave the world (John 12:33; 13:1), and the nature and end of the present age (Matthew 24 and 25; Mark 13; Luke 21).

Some Scriptures cause us to examine His characteristic of omniscience more closely. For example, Matthew 24:36 indicates that He did not know the date of His return; and Mark records that Jesus went to the fig tree expecting to find fruit and was disappointed (Mark 11:13).

Here it is important to point out that in His days on earth, or the days of His *flesh*, Jesus gave up His right to the independent exercise of His divine characteristics. He purposely chose not to use His divine powers at that time. He had powers He could have drawn upon to deliver Himself, but He refused to use them

(Matthew 26:52-54). He did this of His own free will, for He knew that unless He submitted to suffering and death, He could not fulfill His mission to die in place of sinful man. Now that His mission is accomplished, He has resumed all of His divine characteristics, including His attribute of knowing all things.

Jesus is revealed in Scripture as the *eternal* Son of God (John 1:1; 1 John 1:1; Micah 5:2). He has always existed, and He shall exist forever (Hebrews 1:11-12; 13:8). These Scriptures also declare that Jesus Christ *does not change*. These characteristics that we have seen are the attributes of God. Thus, they give clear evidence of the deity of Jesus Christ.

6 In your notebook explain why Jesus did not exercise all of His divine characteristics while He was in the flesh.

7 In your notebook write the headings *Moral Attributes of Jesus* and *Natural Attributes of Jesus*. Make a list of the attributes which go with each heading. Then compare your list with the moral and natural attributes of God discussed in Lessons 1 and 2. What does this comparison reveal?

Claims to Deity

Jesus made certain definite claims that He was God. On the eve of His death, He appealed to the apostles to accept these claims on the basis of His miraculous works (John 14:11). What were His claims?

1. He stated to the Jews that He and the Father were one (John 10:30).
2. As He stood accused before the council of the elders, Jesus again declared that He was the Son of God (Luke 22:70-71, John 19:7).
3. He asserted that salvation could be obtained only through Him (John 10:9).
4. He said that He was the only access to the Father (John 14:6).
5. He stated that no one could do anything without His enablement (John 15:5).

6. During His teaching ministry, He testified to His pre-existence (John 8:58; 17:5).
7. He directed His disciples to pray in His name (John 16:23).
8. When He sent His disciples forth to minister, He gave them power to perform miracles (Luke 9:1-2).

All of these claims and statements, plus the miraculous works Jesus performed, provide solid evidence that verifies His claims to be God.

Names That Indicate Deity

Names that could only be used in reference to God are given to Jesus Christ throughout the New Testament. The inspired writers often refer to Him as the *Son of God*. A voice from heaven on two different occasions acclaimed Him as the Son of God (Matthew 3:17; 17:5). Jesus also used this title to refer to Himself (John 10:36).

Another name that indicates deity was foretold by the prophet Isaiah and repeated by the angel that talked to Joseph (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:22-23). The child would be called *Immanuel*, which means “*God with us*” (Matthew 1:23). Deity came to live for a while on earth with men and women (John 1:14).

John wrote that Jesus was the *Word* of God. To us it seems to be a rather strange title, but in those days philosophers had the idea that one could sum up the reason and power behind the universe in the concept of the word. So John says, “The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us” (John 1:14). A person’s word expresses what he is thinking. God’s Word is God’s thought expressed in such a way that man can understand it. God is not separated from His creation—He reveals Himself. John declares that the Word (Jesus) was God from eternity (John 1:1-2).

Jesus is also referred to as *God*. Paul wrote that “we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13).

The Hebrew name *Messiah* was often used in connection with Jesus. The same name in its Greek form is *Christ*. Another

translation of this name would be *Anointed*. What was an anointed one to the Hebrew people? In their culture, when God called a person to do a special work, that one was *anointed* by a religious leader who poured oil on the chosen person's head. This was a symbol of his separation for service. The Hebrew people were accustomed to the anointing of prophets, priests, and kings. Thus, when Peter declared that Jesus was both Lord and Christ, his hearers understood what he meant (Acts 2:36). The response of several thousand people indicates that they accepted Jesus as their *Messiah*, or *Anointed One*.

Jesus was also called *Lord*. Sometimes this name was used as a title of courtesy, but on many occasions it was used out of respect for His deity. (See Luke 1:43; 2:11; John 20:28; Acts 16:31; and 1 Corinthians 12:3.) This name, as it was often used of our Lord, comes from the translation of the Hebrew term *Jehovah*. Thus, Christ the Messiah is identified with the Old Testament Jehovah.

8 In your notebook, list the names given to Jesus that indicate His deity and an appropriate Scripture reference for each.

9 Circle the letter for each TRUE statement. The Deity of Jesus is revealed through

- a) His receiving the worship of men, forgiving sin, raising of the dead, and claiming the right to judge.
- b) His moral attributes of holiness and love.
- c) His natural attributes of omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, and eternity.
- d) the manner in which His own people received him.
- e) His personal claims to deity.
- f) His names that indicated His divinity.

THE UNION OF DEITY AND HUMANITY IN CHRIST

The doctrine of the incarnation was an issue that remained unresolved in the early days of the church. The doctrine of the Trinity was solidly grounded in the Old Testament Scriptures, the experience of the companions of Jesus, and the inspired writings of the New Testament. But the question which brought forth much speculation was this: How was it possible for the

eternal Son, who is equally God with the Father, and of the same substance or essence as the Father, to become human flesh, to become a man as we are men?

Some people who attempted to explain the incarnation so emphasized Jesus' humanity that they practically denied His deity. Others did just the opposite; they stressed His deity to the point of almost denying His humanity. Eventually, the early church leaders were able to arrive at a definition of the incarnation which is still considered basic to Christian belief about the person of Jesus.

Characteristics of the Incarnation

Objective 4. *Choose statements which represent biblical teaching concerning the incarnation.*

The definition of the incarnation given by the early church leaders (at a meeting called the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451) is this:

Our Lord Jesus Christ was truly God and truly man, of the same substance with the Father in all things as to His divinity, yet in His humanity like us in all things except sin. Thus, Jesus is known in two natures: divine and human. The two natures are distinct one from the other. This distinction is not destroyed by their union, but the unique features of each nature is maintained.

This definition certainly does not remove the mystery of the incarnation. To the contrary, all Christians share the apostle Paul's sense of wonder: "The mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body" (1 Timothy 3:16). We will understand this difficult concept better as we consider the union of the human and divine natures in Jesus and the significance of this unique event.

When we speak of the *human nature* and the *divine nature* of Christ, we refer to His essential being or reality. When we say that Jesus has a *divine nature*, we mean that all the qualities, properties, or attributes which a person might use to describe God apply to Him. Thus, He is God—not just *like* Him, but very God.

When we say that Jesus has a *human nature*, we mean that Jesus Christ is not God pretending to be a man—He is a man. He is not *only* a man or *only* God. He is God who "became flesh

and lived for a while among us” (John 1:14). He did not cease to be God when He became a man. He did not trade His deity for humanity. Instead, He *assumed* humanity. That is, He added a human nature to His divine nature. Therefore, because of the incarnation, He is both God and man, the God man.

Jesus as Christ had all the qualities which belong to human beings, including bodily, physical qualities. However, we cannot say that at the deepest level of His being He is a *human* person. He is a *divine* person with a human nature. That is, He did not add a man’s personality to His own nature; rather, He added a man’s nature to His own personality. His divine personality is that which is at the deepest level. If He were not a divine person, He could not be the object of our worship, for Christians are commanded to worship God only.

So we see that the incarnate Son unites true deity and true humanity in a personal self. Thus, there is such a communion of qualities in Him that we can speak of Him in any way that is appropriate to speak of God or of man.

10 Circle the letter preceding TRUE statements that represent biblical teaching concerning the incarnation.

- a) Jesus Christ is a divine Person who assumed our humanity.
- b) Christ is a human person who assumed deity.
- c) Since Jesus Christ is a divine Person, He is the appropriate object of our worship.
- d) As to His human nature, Jesus hungered, thirsted, was weary, and experienced pain and death. As to His divine nature, He wanted always to do His Father’s will, for He was truly God.

Reasons for the Incarnation

In our limited state we shall never be able to understand fully why our Lord became man. What could have motivated the Son of God to come to earth, to become part of a race which had fallen, and to become surrounded by jealousy and hate?

First of all, God could not die. It was necessary that there be a blameless sacrifice for sin. Since all mankind was sinful, God became flesh to provide the perfect sacrifice, paying the penalty

for sin (Hebrews 2:9). Second, through the incarnation, Jesus revealed the Father to mankind in all His matchless excellence and beauty (John 14:7-11). Third, by becoming man, our Lord provided us with an appropriate example (1 Peter 2:21-25). As we examine His responses to the human situation, we are able to identify with Him and recognize that the goal of Christian living is Christlikeness (Romans 8:29).

Jesus told His disciples that He was sending them into the world in the same way that the Father sent Him (John 17:18; 20:21). This commandment consists of announcing God's provision of salvation to all who will believe. It is part of the Great Commission to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15). Jesus was God's provision for our salvation. We are to take this news to all people.

11 Write **1** in front of each statement if it is a valid or TRUE reason for the incarnation. Write **2** if it is not valid.

- a. Jesus had to take on a mortal body so that He could pay the death penalty for our sins.
- b. The incarnation was necessary because God needed to know what it was like to be a sinful man.
- c. Through the incarnation we have a revelation of the Father's love, concern, and provisions for man.
- d. The incarnation gave Christ firsthand experience of the limitations and weaknesses of humanity. This qualifies Him to intercede for us with the Father.
- e. As a result of the incarnation, man is no longer born in sin, for the sacrifice of God's Son in the flesh has made man blameless.

THE WORKS OF CHRIST

Objective 5. *Choose statements which explain why Christ's works are of importance for man.*

We turn now to the works of Christ. When we speak of His *works*, we refer to Christ's death, resurrection, ascension, and exaltation. We will consider these works in the order of their occurrence.

His Death

The death of Jesus Christ was different from that of any other man. First, His death was entirely voluntary. He said of His death, “No one takes it [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord” (John 10:18). At the point of death He dismissed His spirit (Matthew 27:50). Death was not forced upon Him by Satan or the overpowering might of Roman soldiers. Rather, He accepted it as the will of God for the salvation of mankind.

His death was a work, in that by His death Christ paid the penalty for our sin. The penalty for sin is separation from God. It was the price He had to pay for our salvation. As He was dying on the cross, He experienced this awful separation. He cried out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34). In this work He appeased or calmed the anger of God which was aroused by our sin. He let the blow of God’s divine justice fall upon Himself. By His sacrifice, Christ made atonement for our sins, covering them by His death, which was a substitute for ours. He did this so that we could be forgiven and restored to a place of harmony with God.

Down through the ages men have tried to turn away the anger of their supposed gods. How pathetic their efforts have been! They have presented offerings and given blood sacrifices, but they have gone away without knowing if their sacrifice was accepted. The Aztec Indians, for example, had great fear of what they thought were their gods. They offered as many human sacrifices as they thought were required, but their generous, costly, and sincere efforts were always in vain. Their priests’ response was always the same: “Our god demands more blood!”

The Bible shows us that our heavenly Father is indeed angry because of our sin, but His anger is not like that of the Aztec idea of a god. We do not have to fear or be in doubt concerning what we must do to turn away His anger. He Himself did it. He offered His own sacrifice—His Son. Through His death, Jesus paid the penalty and made everything right. In so doing, God’s justice was maintained. Sin was covered, the penalty was paid, man was

forgiven, and he had access to a holy God. Paul explains it this way in Romans 3:25-26:

God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies the man who has faith in Jesus.

The death of Christ also has a practical application in our daily lives. In his letter to the Galatian church, Paul says, “I have been put to death with Christ on his cross” (Galatians 2:19, TEV). “Those who belong to Christ Jesus have put to death their human nature with all its passions and desires” (5:24, TEV). This involves the crucifixion of *self*, which means giving up our own desires in order to do what pleases Him. Christ’s crucifixion must become our crucifixion. The salvation He provides gives us the possibility to live a holy life—one that truly pleases God. This must become *actual* as we surrender our lives to His lordship and the control of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:5-11).

12 Are you making progress in putting to death your sinful nature? List in your notebook things that others can see in you which show that you are crucifying self and giving this Christian responsibility the attention it should have.

13 Circle the letters preceding TRUE statements concerning the importance of Christ’s work for us.

- a** His death paid the penalty for sin and satisfied the anger of God.
- b** Christ’s death was the result of forces beyond His control; thus, it was an accident.
- c** The death of Christ restored full fellowship between God and man.
- d** His death satisfied the justice of God which is directed at the sin of man.
- e** Because of Christ’s death, we will not have to answer for our sins, even if we continue in sin.
- f** Christ’s death is an example of God’s desire to punish man for his weaknesses and human failures.

His Resurrection

The work of our Lord Jesus Christ would have been incomplete and our faith would be in vain if He had not risen to life again (1 Corinthians 15:14). This event marked the completion of His work on earth. Christ's resurrection, therefore, sets Christianity totally apart from all other religions and beliefs. No other religion can say that its founder's grave is empty. We Christians do not gather at the spot where our Lord's remains lie, because He did not remain in the grave! We exalt Him as the living Savior! He conquered death! Because He lives, we have inherited eternal life.

The resurrection of Christ is the keystone of the Christian faith. Without His resurrection, the death of Christ would have no meaning, for the resurrection proved the effectiveness of His death and gave it value. Of this Paul says, "He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification" (Romans 4:25).

There are many reasons why the resurrection is of great importance to us. We shall note some of the more significant results of this great event:

1. The resurrection shows that Christ's work as the sinner's substitute has been accepted. We can have confidence that God has accepted Christ's substitutionary death, because *God has raised Him from the dead* (Acts 2:24, 32; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30).
2. The resurrection confirms the deity of our Lord. Paul declares in Romans 1:4, "Through the Spirit of holiness [He—Jesus] was declared with power to be the Son of God *by his resurrection from the dead*" (italics mine).
3. By virtue of His resurrection, Christ has become *our high priest* in the presence of God (Hebrews 9:24). He is our intercessor (Romans 8:34), our executive in the heavenly realm (Ephesians 1:20-22), our mediator (1 Timothy 2:5), and our advocate or lawyer (1 John 2:1). Thus, in addition to the deliverance from bondage which He

brought about by His death, Christ intercedes for us before the throne of grace.

4. The resurrection demonstrates God's great power in providing salvation for us. We can rest assured that He will supply the necessary power for us to live and serve Him effectively (Compare Philippians 3:10 with Philippians 1:6). He is all-powerful.
5. The resurrection is our guarantee that those who die in Christ will be raised from the dead (John 5:28; 6:40; Romans 8:11; 1 Corinthians 15:20-23; 1 Thessalonians 4:14).

The resurrection, therefore, brought to a fitting conclusion Christ's saving mission. It was planned in eternity past but carried out as God broke into the chain of human existence through the incarnation. Having lived a perfect life, Christ died as the sinner's perfect substitute, paying the penalty for his sin. In doing this, He calmed the anger of God, reconciled the sinner to God, and restored to him the ability to respond to the Holy Spirit. Then Christ's work on earth was completed, and the time arrived for Him to return to the Father. His mission was accomplished!

14 Circle the letter preceding statements which give TRUE results of the resurrection.

- a The resurrection made Christianity one of several religions whose founder returned to life.
- b The resurrection indicated God's acceptance of Christ's sacrifice as an atonement for the sins of man.
- c The deity of our Lord is confirmed by His resurrection.
- d Through His resurrection, Christ has become our high priest who intercedes in our behalf in the presence of God.
- e The resurrection guarantees that Christians can never again fall out of favor with God.
- f The resurrection is the believer's guarantee that those who die in Christ will be raised from the dead at the coming of Christ.

His Ascension and Exaltation

The New Testament record shows that after 40 days of ministry following His resurrection, Christ *ascended* or returned

to heaven: “He was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight” (Acts 1:9). Christ’s resurrection and ascension are closely connected in the preaching of the apostles (Acts 2:32-35; Ephesians 1:20; 1 Peter 3:21-22). These two events are the beginning of the exaltation of our crucified Lord.

The word *ascension* speaks of the event in which Christ returned to heaven. The word *exaltation* speaks of His being “lifted up,” “raised to a higher level.” Jesus was raised to a position of honor and glory at the Father’s right hand. His ascension and exaltation are highly significant for us. In His exaltation, Christ received His proper place as Sovereign Lord (Acts 2:33-36; 5:31; Ephesians 1:19-23; Hebrews 2:14-18; 4:14-16). This exalted status has resulted in some wonderful benefits for His people, a few of which we shall note:

1. While He is now in heaven, Jesus is spiritually present everywhere, filling the entire universe (Ephesians 4:10). He is therefore the ideal object of worship for all people (1 Corinthians 1:2).
2. Jesus has entered into His priestly ministry in heaven, as we have already explained (Hebrews 4:14; 5:5-10).
3. He has bestowed gifts upon His people (Ephesians 4:8-11). This includes gifts for individuals (1 Corinthians 12:4-11) and for the church (Ephesians 4:8-13).
4. He has poured out the Holy Spirit upon His people (Acts 2:33).
5. As the exalted Prince and Savior, He is giving repentance and faith to people (Acts 5:31; 11:18; 2 Peter 1:1).
6. Our ascended and exalted Lord returned to heaven with His humanity (His glorified body). This idea is stressed in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the writer declares that since Jesus shared our human experiences, He is able to be a merciful and faithful High Priest (Hebrews 2:14-18; 4:14-16). This is a great source of strength and comfort.

15 In your notebook define the terms *ascension* and *exaltation*.

16 In this exercise, place a **1** in front of statements which correctly identify the results of Christ's works and **2** in front of those that do not correctly identify them.

- **a** Christ fills the universe and is therefore an ideal object of worship for all mankind.
- **b** Christ finished His work in behalf of people and is no longer involved in their spiritual lives.
- **c** Christ entered into His role as High Priest for the people of God.
- **d** Christ gives gifts to individual believers and to His church as a whole.
- **e** The Holy Spirit has been poured out upon believers.
- **f** Christ's death paid the penalty for sin and satisfied the anger of God.
- **g** The death of Christ restored full fellowship between God and man.
- **h** The believer has no further need to develop his spiritual life, since this is all done by Jesus.
- **i** The resurrection is the believer's guarantee that those who die in Christ will be raised from the dead.

We have seen that all of the works of Christ have great meaning for us. Through His death He has paid the penalty for our sin. His resurrection gives us assurance of eternal life with Him. Through His ascension and exaltation He was raised to His proper place as our Sovereign Lord. Now He builds up and cares for the church, providing everything necessary to bring us to spiritual maturity.

self-test

1 Which of these are evidences of Christ's humanity as presented in the Bible?

- a) Human limitations and human names
- b) Human ancestry
- c) Human sinfulness
- d) Human appearance and development

2 Biblical evidence for the deity of Jesus Christ reveals that

- a) He regularly exercised all of the rights of deity.
- b) His behavior, His claims, and His qualities proved that He was more than a mere man.
- c) the evidence is limited to His personal claims and the testimony of His friends.

3 Which statement most accurately reflects Christian doctrine concerning the nature of the incarnation? The Lord Jesus Christ

- a) was God pretending to be a man.
- b) had a human nature.
- c) had a divine nature.
- d) was truly God and truly man.

4 The Scriptures reveal to us that Jesus Christ

- a) is a human person who assumed divinity.
- b) is a divine person who assumed our humanity.
- c) had some of the qualities which belong to human beings.
- d) had some of the qualities which belong to divinity.

5 The main purpose of the incarnation was to

- a) set in motion God's plan of redemption for man.
- b) bring to an end the rule of the Old Testament Law.
- c) establish a moral example for mankind to follow.
- d) let people know what God was really like.

6 Christ's death is considered a work because it

- a) was a task He willingly undertook to pay the penalty for our sin.
- b) involved great physical effort, as well as abuse and death.
- c) was forced upon Him.

7 The incarnation was necessary because

- a) Christ had to take on a mortal body so that He could pay the penalty for our sins.
- b) it revealed the heavenly Father to people.
- c) in it God learned the depths of sin and what it is like to be a sinful man.
- d) in it Christ gave us a perfect example.

8 A practical significance of Christ's death involves our *crucifixion of self*. This means that those who belong to Christ must

- a) personally experience death for their own sins.
- b) put to death their sinful nature because salvation makes it possible to live a holy life.
- c) recognize that by His death Christ has done away with their sinful nature so that they are completely holy.

9 Christ's work of resurrection is significant because

- a) it demonstrated the Father's acceptance of Christ's sacrifice as an atonement for sin.
- b) it confirmed the deity of our Lord.
- c) it guarantees that the Christian cannot fall out of favor with God.
- d) Christ is now our High Priest who intercedes for us in the Father's presence.
- e) it is the believer's guarantee that he will be raised from the dead at Christ's coming.

10 The ascension and exaltation of our Lord are important because these events brought about

- a) a new part of Christ's ministry: as sovereign Lord He cares for and builds up the church, and His presence is everywhere.
- b) the end of Christ's work in behalf of man.
- c) the beginning of truly spiritual worship.

answers to study questions

- 9** All are true except d).
- 1** You should have said intellectually, physically, spiritually, and socially. Jesus developed in all of these ways.
- 10** a), c), and d) are TRUE.
- 2** a and b are TRUE.
- 11** a, c, and d are valid reasons.
- 3** a 4) Human limitations
 d 3) Human appearance.
 b 5) Human names.
 e 2) Human development.
 c 1) Human ancestry.
- 12** Your answer. We all need to do this on a daily basis.
- 4** He accepted the worship of men, He forgave sin, He raised the dead, and He was given the right to judge all things.
- 13** a, c, and d are TRUE statements.
- 5** He revealed His holiness by not sinning. He revealed His love by humility, meekness, service, and gentleness, by His close relationship with God the Father, and in many other ways.
- 14** All are TRUE except a and e.
- 6** He chose to subject Himself to human limitations so that He could fulfill His mission to die for sinful man.
- 15** *Ascension* refers to the event in which Christ returned to heaven in His glorified body. *Exaltation* refers to Jesus being raised to a position of honor and glory at the Father's right hand.
- 7** *Moral attributes of Jesus:* holiness and love. *Natural attributes of Jesus:* wisdom, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, and eternity. A comparison reveals that these are the attributes of God.

16 All are correct statements except b and h.

- 8 a** the Word (John 1:14).
- b** Son of God (John 10:36).
- c** Messiah, Christ, Anointed One (Acts 2:36).
- d** Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14).
- e** Lord (Luke 2:11).

Your Notes

