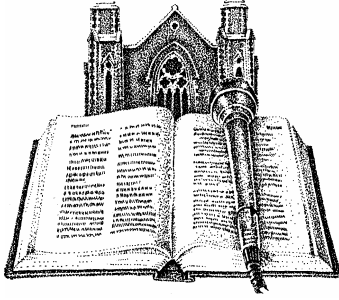


KNOW YOUR BIBLE



*Sermons Notes from
Stuart Olyott's preaching*

The Lord Jesus Christ

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No. 1 His pre-existence

I AM what I was - GOD

I was not what I am - MAN

I am now called both - GOD and MAN.

(Old Latin inscription)

The importance of this truth

Christ's birth did not mark His origin. He is unique

There could be no Trinity without the pre-existent Son of God.

If Christ had no prior existence, He could not have come to be a living revelation of God

How this truth is taught in the New Testament.

He is clearly said to be the Creator. *John 1:1-3, Col 1:15-18.*

It is clearly taught that He was with the Father before the world existed; that He was rich, and possessed glory. *John 1:1,15,30, 6:62, 8:57-58, 17:5, 2 Cor 8:9.*

He is clearly represented as the One who came into the world, having come down from heaven.

John 3:13, 31, 13:3, 16:27-28, 1 Cor 15:47

How this truth is taught in the Old Testament.

Look at the following key passages :-

Psalm 45, esp. 6-7	see also	(Hebrews 1:8-9)
Psalm 110, esp. 1		(Matthew 22:41-46)
Isaiah 9:6-7		(Matthew 4:14-16)
Micah 5:2		(Matthew 2:6, John 7:42)
Malachi 3:1-2		(Mark 1:2)
Zechariah 2:10-11		

Appearances of Christ in the Old Testament

God sometimes appeared to ancient Israel. It could not have been God the Father, because He has never been seen. *John 1:18, 6:46.*

The Jehovah who appeared is also described as the One sent by Jehovah (the Angel of the Lord). The Father is never sent. But the Son is. *John 5:36.*

In Old Testament times Christ came in the form of a man, while at Bethlehem He became man. In the Old Testament He took human form only temporarily and for a limited purpose; but at Bethlehem He became flesh perpetually.

Such appearances are usually called 'theophanies'. Examples are Genesis 16:7-13, 18:2-33, 32:24-32 (see Hosea 12:3-5), Exodus 3:2-6 (see 14:19, Isaiah 63:7-9). In each case the Angel sent by God is seen to be God Himself.

Malachi 3:1 is decisive. The messenger or angel of the covenant is declared to be the Lord. Mark 1:2 refers this verse to Christ

“But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, MADE OF A WOMAN...”
(Gal 4:4)

Next week we look at the virgin conception birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

No. 2 His Birth

Job complained “...I cannot perceive.... behold..... see him”. *Job 23:8-9*
Philip requested “Lord show us the Father...”! *John 14:8*
Jesus declared “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father”. *John 14:9, see 1:18.*

A Mystery

We may not understand how He could be both perfectly divine and fully human but this should not stumble our faith.

God prepared the world for 4000 years before this event took place. A sinless Man arrived amongst sinful men! Could this have occurred in an ordinary way?

It is easy to believe in the HOW of His birth when we remember WHO was born.

Does not the pre-existence of Christ demand some miracle of birth?

He did not come by natural generation - a man and a woman

He did not come as Adam did - without a man and a woman

He did not come as Eve did - a man without a woman

He did not come as Isaac did - a man and a woman divinely empowered

He was born of a woman, without a man, having been begotten of the Holy Spirit. *Matt 1:20, Luke 1:35.*

A Miracle

It was not a mere baby who was thus supernaturally begotten, but the eternal Son of God with respect to His human nature. At no time was His supernatural identity suspended.

Yet the conception, embryonic development and birth were as for other children

Except that it was a virgin conception, and of such a character to ensure sinlessness.

Such a birth was foreshadowed in the Old Testament

"the seed of the woman" in Gen 3:15 is remarkable. On every other occasion the phrase is used of the seed of the man.

No language could be clearer than that of Isaiah 7:14, quoted in Matthew 1:22-23

The seriousness of rejecting this truth.

If the virgin birth is untrue:-

The New Testament is unreliable, and without authority.

Mary was unchaste, for Joseph was clear the child was not his. *Matt 1:18-19*

Jesus was the natural child of sinful parents. He was thus not pre-existent, and not the incarnate Son of God.

There is no way to explain His peerless character and sinless life.

He was not God manifest in the flesh, and had no power to forgive sin, or to be an acceptable Substitute on the cross.

There is no reason why we should stop at rejecting this miracle. Why not reject them all?

Some objections considered.

Having one parent does not guarantee sinlessness.

True - Psalm 51:5

It was the special activity of the Holy Spirit in protection and preservation and not just a supernatural begetting which guaranteed His sinlessness. Luke 1:35.

Both Matthew & Luke trace Jesus' ancestry through Joseph.

Luke's genealogy is that of Mary, who was apparently of the same tribe & family of Joseph.

Matthew gives Joseph's line to establish Christ's right to the throne of David. Technical study bears this out.

The men who compiled the tables were men who also recorded the virgin birth. They would hardly have contradicted it, and in fact guarded the truth jealously - see Matt 1:16, Luke 3,23.

Many New Testament writers do not refer to the event at all.

But their silence proves nothing, except that they did not mention it'

They certainly say nothing whatever to contradict it

Paul in particular uses some unusual and significant expressions when referring to the incarnation - *Rom 8:3, Phil 2:7, Gal 4:4.*

The Sinless One has come !

God was manifest in the flesh !

There is a Saviour for sinners !

Next week we look at the childhood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

No. 3 His Childhood

And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him. *Luke 2:40.*

Jesus began life as a perfect child, but as a CHILD nonetheless
The Saviour, Christ the Lord, was born! How unlike pagan deities!
He passed through every experience we pass through - without sin.
We know of a few details of His infancy, such as His birth, presentation in the Temple, visit from Wise Men, flight into Egypt, and arrival in Nazareth. *Matt 1:18-2:23, Luke 2:1-40.*
But nothing of His childhood up to the age of 12 is recorded, except the verse above. No amazing incidents are recorded, because none happened. He grew & developed as a normal child, not a prodigy, yet without sin - *Heb 4:15.*

Nazareth.

He was brought up in a small, rough, despised northern village. *Luke 4:16-30, John 1:45, 7:52*
The oldest of at least 8 children. *Matt 13:55-56*
His supposed father was the village carpenter. *Matt 13:55.*
The home was probably a typical Jewish home of the place and period.
And He lived and grew there without sin.

The child grew

He experienced normal physical development. indistinguishable from other boys, except for His sinlessness.
The foundation of His later amazing physical endurance was laid.
He played the games, and entered the occupations of other children. *Luke 7:31-32.*
His voice would give promise of its later power.

Filled with wisdom.

He advanced in mental attainment.
He learned to speak; to read (*Luke 4:17*); and to write (*John 8:6-8*).
From earliest days Mary would have taught Him Psalms, OT history, parts of Law.
From 3 Joseph would have given Him more thorough teaching, in the Law, and the meaning of the festivals - and a trade!
From 6-11 he would have attended the village school held in the synagogue which He attended on Sabbaths, and learned the Law, by repetition.
No stain of sin would have clouded His understanding of spiritual things; and He would increasingly see that the Scriptures wrote of HIM!
Throughout this time He was observant, and probably asked many questions. He certainly recalled these things with ease and accuracy in later years (e.g. weather, weddings, sower, reaper, shepherd, innkeeper, soldiers, Pharisees, tax men, fishers, candles, leaven, vineyards, etc....)

He also began that personal mastery of all branches of education which would later make the rabbis gasp - *John 7:15*.

At 12 He would have become a 'Son of the Law', and would have been robed in the garments of a man.

And the grace of God was upon Him.

He was totally unlike any other child in this respect.

There was no flaw or defect in His personality, purity, kindness, meekness, goodness, truthfulness, obedience to parents, etc...

It was the perfect, all-rounded development of a sinless child.

"Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased." *Luke 3:22*.

Next week we look at the youth and early manhood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

No. 4 His Youth and early manhood

At the age of twelve

Luke 2:41-52 alone breaks the silence concerning our Lord's youth here we see His inmost mind as He approached adolescence
At 12 Jesus would have become a 'son of the law'
Shortly afterwards He probably made His first journey to Jerusalem
An unforgettable experience! (journey - pilgrims - city - Temple!)
Joseph & Mary were distressed to find He was not in the returning company
They at last found Him among the discussing rabbis
Mary gently but firmly reproached Him' for His behaviour.
Our Lord's reply contains His first recorded words. *Luke 2:49*.
They were not understood, but Mary treasured them up, & told them later
He had more reason to be surprised at their search than they at His absence
He tacitly disowned any human relationship with Joseph
And revealed His unique relationship with God - "my 'Father" is an expression without parallel
He was under spiritual compulsion to remain in the Temple
It was the natural place for Him to be, it was His true home
His identity was also revealed by His remarkable questions and answers.
The curtain falls On His boyhood as He returns to Nazareth. *Luke 2:51*.
There He continued as an exemplary and dutiful son
He advanced intellectually, spiritually, physically, socially. *Luke 2:51*.
The last expression seems to suggest an attractiveness in His personality.

From twelve to thirty

What was He doing all that time,
From twelve years old to manly prime?
Was He then idle, or the less
About His Father's business?

There follow 18 years of hidden discipline, of which only one detail is told us.
He continued as in Luke 2:52, and to be "tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin"
Heb 4:15.
The solitary detail is that during this time He was a carpenter. *Mark 6:3*.
The Lord of glory chose this occupation!
He spent six times as long at the carpenter's bench as in public ministry.
He delighted to do His Father's will (*Ps 40:8*), and this involved being "made like unto His brethren" *Heb 2:17*
Joseph seems to have died, and Jesus supported the Nazar'eth home and family. This says a great deal about domestic responsibility. *1 Tim 5:8*
He thus put a dignity upon manual work which has not been put on any other form of work
It was not beneath Him. He has given it nobility, not inferiority.

It shows there is no necessary connection between manual work and poor intelligence and low spirituality.

He has known all the temptations of working men - without sin!

He has shown that true spirituality is not isolationism

He has demonstrated that work which does not hit the headlines can still be done to the glory of God.

He has proved that there are means of education which no institution or library can provide.

He has also shown that God's preparation for our future work is our present work.

His carpentry would have been perfect ! Faithful in little, He became faithful in much. True to God in His hidden life, He was entrusted with His public ministry.

From the carpenter's shop He derived many of the illustrations He was to use in His later teaching

It was also the school where were developed such personal graces as patience, persistence, thoroughness etc...

He also developed physical strength for the unrivalled demands and unremitting strain of His public ministry.

“And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God ”

John 1:34.

Next week we look at the baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ.

No. 5 His Baptism

Without clear views of Christ we Will drop out of the spiritual race

We are therefore looking at His Person and Work.

We have studied His pre-existence; His birth; His childhood; His youth and early manhood; and tonight we come to:-

His Baptism

This is mentioned in all four Gospels.

Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1:9-11, Luke 3:21-22, John 1:29-34.

The event

When He was 30 years old Jesus left His Nazareth home, and took the long journey from Galilee to the River Jordan.

Here John the Baptist was preaching and baptising

Jesus waited until the rest were baptised, and then presented Himself.

John attempted to hinder Him, aghast that the spotless Lamb of God should insist on a baptism intended for sinners.

He recognised that Jesus needed no purification, but was qualified to give it to those who did need it, including himself.

Jesus said - "Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness"

John, recognising Christ's identity, yielded to higher authority, and proceeded to baptise Him.

The baptism was by immersion, in the River Jordan.

Jesus went up out of the water immediately and was praying as He did so.

At that moment the heavens opened; and He witnessed it

He saw the Spirit of God descending in bodily form, as a dove, and settling on Him

This symbolises purity, meekness? gentleness, peace, beauty.

It remained and rested on Him, in fulfilment of Isaiah 11:2,

This confirmed to John that he was indeed baptising the promised Christ.

A voice from heaven announced - "Thou art my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

Each Person of the Trinity was thus manifested at the event.

Immediately the Spirit led Him into the wilderness, to be tempted of the Devil.

Its significance

This baptism was a purifying rite for repentant sinners who were confessing and abandoning their sins in order to prepare themselves for the coming of the Messiah.

Why, then, was the sinless Christ Himself baptised by John?

It was a baptism for sinners. The Lord Jesus Christ had come to identify Himself with sinners - to live, die, and rise again on their behalf. Such identification was necessary for Him to fulfil all righteousness, and to secure it for them. His baptism publicly marked His identification, pledged Him to the cross, and in this sense was necessary "to fulfil all righteousness".

The Old Testament priests were priests from birth, but lived for 30 years as private persons. At 30 they stepped out of private life and assumed their public responsibilities, and this was marked by a ceremony (*Num 4:3, Lev 8*). Our Lord's baptism had a similar significance (*John 1:31*). It was a rite which foreshadowed His own priestly activity (*Luke 12:50*).

The voice which spoke from the rent heavens set the Father's seal of approval on the silent years, and gave assurance that He who was now formally instituted into Messiah's office was sinless, qualified to embark on His public ministry, and indeed the One of which the Old Testament spoke (*Psalms 2:7,12, Isaiah 42:1*).

From His conception to Calvary, all that the Lord Jesus Christ did was "through the eternal Spirit" (*Heb 9:14*). Although He never had a restricted measure of the Spirit (*John 3:34*), at His baptism He received that extraordinary anointing of the Spirit which endued Him with the power and gifts necessary to discharge His public ministry (*Acts 10:38*), and marked Him out for evermore as the One who Himself baptises in the Holy Spirit (*John 1:32-33*).

The baptism of our Lord is the first distinct revelation of the doctrine of the Trinity. That this should take place at this public inauguration was a demonstration that the work of redemption is the work of the whole Godhead. The Father sent the Son who was led and upheld by the Spirit. It is in this threefold Name that we ourselves are baptised (*Matt 28:19*).

By this act our Lord established the way in which we are to testify to our union with Him. He identified Himself with us, and signified the death, burial and resurrection through which He was to pass for us. When we are baptised as believers we signify our complete identification or union with Him in that death, burial and resurrection. (*Rom 6:3-5, Col 2:12*). Thus it becometh us.

Next week we look at the temptation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

No. 6 His Temptation

Without clear views of Christ we will drop out of the spiritual race.

We are therefore looking at His Person and Work.

We have studied His pre-existence; His birth; His childhood; His youth and early manhood; His baptism; and tonight we come to:-

His Temptation

This is recorded in Matthew 4:1-11, Mark 1:12-13, Luke 4:1-13.

When it came.

After the approval of heaven comes the assault of hell; after the dove, the devil.

It lasted throughout a forty-day period, in which Jesus did not eat

The period ended with three particular temptations, recorded in detail

Afterwards the devil "departed from him for a season."

This shows that our Lord was tempted again later; indeed, throughout His life

"he himself has suffered being tempted." (*Heb 2:18*).

"in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." (*Heb 4:15*).

From whom it came.

From a personal tempter, not from within - "in him was no sin." (*1 John 3:5*).

A struggle with an external adversary seeking to deflect Him from His high purpose.

Not in luxuriant Eden, but in the wastes of Jordan.

By three representative tests.

Who can imagine their intensity!?

Where it was aimed.

1. On the physical plane - appetite: the desire to enjoy things.

"the lust of the flesh" (*1 John 2:16*).

The desire for food is God-given, legitimate, and innocent

If He was God's Son, why not use His unique powers to satisfy His hunger?

The temptation was so crafty that none of us would have recognised it as a Satanic attack.

But Jesus was "made like unto his brethren" (*Heb 2:17*)

The temptation was to call into service powers His brethren could not employ

To satisfy a legitimate craving in an illegitimate way

He chose not to use His deity to minister to His humanity

He chose to walk in His Father's will, and to await His word and provision

2. On mental plane - ambition: the desire to achieve things.

"the pride of life" (*1 John 2:16*).

Satan took our Lord to the Temple's parapet, overlooking the Kidron valley.

"anyone looking down would be giddy, while his sight would not reach to such an immense depth" (Josephus)

The temptation was enforced by a misquotation of Psalm 91:11-12.

The devil challenged Him to jump, and to put God's promise to the test.

But Jesus could distinguish faith from presumptuously running into danger, and thus tempting God.

He avoided the peril of fanaticism.

And refused to dazzle people into faith.

3. On the spiritual plane - avarice: the desire to obtain things.

"the lust of the eyes" (*1 John 2:16*).

The temptation was to give to Satan the place which belongs to God alone.

It was an offer of world dominion.

The crown was to be His without a cross, but by means of a compromise with Satan.

Our Lord had indeed come to receive world dominion.

He was to receive it from the Father's hand, in the Father's way, at the Father's time. The Father's way was a cross.

This is the way our Lord chose.

He would employ only spiritual and moral means to achieve spiritual and moral ends.

How it was met.

Our Lord did not argue with the devil, or spend time talking things over.

He resorted to the Scriptures, which He knew, and in which He had faith.

He listened to the Word of God, not the word of the tempter.

He brought God's Word to bear on the issue, and thus resisted the devil, who fled.

He maintained the same attitude throughout His life and ministry.

The devil seeks to attack us. Temptation is a certainty for the Christian. *1 Peter 5:8*.

We should resist him just as our Lord did, and he will flee from us. *James 4:7-8a*.

We may also call upon our Lord who has not only resisted but finally defeated, the devil. *Heb 2:16-18, 4:14-16*.

We may be certain that we shall never once meet a temptation which is too much for us. *1 Corinthians 10:12-13*.

Next week we look at the humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

No. 7 His Humanity

Our Lord Jesus Christ was, and is, a man.

this has been denied in the past, and is still denied by some
we should not allow His humanity to fade away before the majesty of His deity
we should take heed to 1 John 4:2-3.

Human ancestry.

He was born of a virgin, Mary (*Luke 1:31, 2:7*), and was the direct descendant of Abraham (*Acts 3:25*) and David (*Acts 13:23, Rom 1:3*). His genealogy is fully recorded (*Matt 1:1-17, Luke 3:23-38*), and his brothers and sisters are referred to (*Matt 14:53-56*).

Human appearance.

He was made "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (*Rom 8:3*). There appeared to be nothing unusual about Him. *John 4:9, 20:15, Luke 24:18, John 21:4-5*.

Human constitution.

He had a truly human nature, but not a sinful nature. He Himself refers to His body (*Matt 26:12*), His soul (*Matt 26:38*), and His spirit (*Luke 23:46*). Even after His resurrection He appeals to the reality of His body as a basis for belief (*Luke 24:39*).

Human description

The title "Son of Man" is used 80 times in the Gospels. It is often found in close association with the title "Son of God", thus stressing His unipersonality (*John 1:49-51, Matt 26:63-64*). He called Himself "man", and was so called by others. (*John 8:40, Acts 2:22, Rom 5:15, 1 Cor 15:21, 1 Tim 2:5*) He is said to have become "flesh". This term denotes human nature. (*John 1:14, 1 Tim 3:16, 1 John 4:2-3*).

Human limitations.

He was tempted (*Matt 4:1*), and hungered (*Matt 4:2, Mark 11:12*), thirsted (*John 19:28*), became weary (*John 4:6*), and slept (*Mark 4:38*). He displayed compassion (*Matt 9:36*), anger (*Mark 3:5*), and love (*John 13:23*). He wept (*John 11:35*), longed for human company (*Matt 26:36-46*), sorrowed (*Matt 26:38*), was troubled (*John 12:27*), suffered (*Luke 22:44*) and died (*John 19:30*). We have seen how He acquired His knowledge through the normal channels. He had limits on His knowledge (*Mark 13:32*), and had need to be sustained by the Spirit (*Acts 10:38, Heb 9:14*), and by prayer (*Heb 5:7*).

"Behold THE MAN" (*John 19:5*).

If He had not become a man, He could not have saved us.

How else could He have acted as the Last Adam? *Rom 5:12-21*.

How else could He have kept the Law on behalf of His people? *Gal 4:4-5*.

How else could He have died in His people's place? *Heb 2:14-16, 9:22.*

How else could He have become our merciful and faithful high priest? *Heb 2:17-18, 4:15-16*

How else could He have become the head of a glorified church of redeemed men and women?

Rom 8:29.

How else could He have provided us with an example, that we should follow in His steps?

John 13:13-15, Phil 2:4-11, Heb 12:2-4, 1 Pet 2:21.

For there is one God, and one mediator
between God and men, THE MAN Christ Jesus. "

(1 Timothy 2:5).

Next week we look at the manliness of our Lord Jesus Christ.

No. 8 His Manliness

Our Lord has often been represented as somewhat effeminate, and a trifle soft. This is a diabolical perversion. He was a manly man. A Lion and a Lamb. He was thought to be Elijah, or John the Baptist (*Matt 16:14*).

He was manly

Consider the unceasing labour of His public ministry. He knew nothing of ease or leisure. It was 3.5 years of constant travel, milling crowds, physical strain, and unabated demand on all His resources.

Consider His sternness when aroused to moral indignation. He was neither harsh and cruel, nor weakly sentimental; and knew the meaning of physical courage (*John 2:13-17, Luke 19:45-47*). Consider the blistering denunciations with which He rebuked the hollow hypocrisy of the religious leaders of the time. No soft effeminacy here (read *Matthew 23*)

Consider that He had courage to remain silent when it would have been easier to speak. Consider also His self-control. He did not respond to provocation. Nor did He engage in self-justification, or in getting His own back. (*Matt 26:62-63, 27:12, Mark 15:4-5, Luke 23:9*). Consider that He did not hesitate to speak right words, when He knew they would bring on Him painful consequences. (*John 18:20-21, 33-37, 19:11, Matt 26:57-66*).

Consider how "he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem." (*Luke 9:51*). No-one shrank from death more than He did, yet He determined to go ahead, and endured the unprecedented pain and shame of the Cross. (*John 12:27-28, Matt 26:36-46, Luke 22:41-44*).

He expects His followers to be the same.

He insists that there must be a counting of the cost before a person follows Him (*Luke 14:28-32*). He refuses those who have not done it, and also refuses the self-centred (*Luke 9:57-62*).

He demands :-

that self should be nothing. My own rights, wishes, desires, pleasures, hopes, do not come into the picture - EVER AGAIN !

that HE should be everything. The only consideration now is "Lord, what wilt THOU have me to do?" (*Acts 9:6*)

that this should be so, WHATEVER it costs. See *Matt 10:37-39, 16:24-25, Mark 8:34-38, Luke 9:23-26, 14:25-27, 33*.

Apply these principles now to - what to do after the service / where to work / how to use evenings / on what to spend money / holidays / where to live / who to court and marry / what church to attend / what Christian work to engage in / how to react to opposition / how to behave when observing Sin / family life / church life / etc. etc. etc.

“He that loveth his life shall lose it;
and he that hateth his life in this world
shall keep it unto life eternal.” (*John 12:25*).

Next week we look at the sinlessness of our Lord Jesus Christ.

No. 9 His Sinlessness

We know that our Lord Jesus Christ stands in a category by Himself.
His character was more wonderful than the greatest miracle.
He was tempted to sin, yet the conflict left Him immaculate.

What He Himself thought.

On 3 occasions He stated directly that He was without sin. (*John 8:1-11, 29, 46, 14:30*)
His sinlessness was a fact so obvious to Him that it hardly required emphasis. It was implied, rather than asserted. For example, consider His I AM's - John 6:35, 8:12, 10:7,14, 11:25, 14:6, 15:1.
He went through life free from all moral discontent, and with a sense of unclouded fellowship with God.
If there had been any sin, His keen moral judgement would have spotted it (*John 2:25*)
Such self-conscious purity is unlike the experiences of the saintly, who constantly bemoan their worthlessness.
"The fact that He never confessed sin implies, in His case, that He never did sin" (T. C. Edwards).

What His friends said.

Their witness is especially valuable.
They lived in close intimacy with Him.
They would not have attributed sinlessness easily, because of their Old Testament background.
Their witness is more credible because it is indirect.
Their estimate can be read in Acts 3:14, 1 Pet 1:19, 2:22, 1 John 1:8-10, 3:5, 2 Cor 5:21, Heb 4:15, 7:26.

What His enemies conceded.

The demons recognised His character and identity. (*Mark 1:24*)
His enemies made many accusations - Mark 2:1 - 3:6 records. accusations of blasphemy, evil company; frivolous religion; and Sabbath breaking
But when He was on trial for His life, they had to resort to false witnesses who could not agree amongst themselves (*Mark 14:56*). Finally the charges had to be political, not moral.
Meanwhile the testimony to His sinlessness kept flowing. (*Matt 27:3-4, 19, 24, Luke 23:15, 41, 47*)

Could Christ have sinned?

Two main views have been held:-
He was able to sin, but didn't.
but :-

He was the God-Man. His divine and human natures were indissoluble united in one Personality. If He could have sinned, then God could sin. This is unthinkable.

If He could have sinned then, He could sin now, for He is "the same yesterday, and today, and for ever" (*Heb 13:8*). This also is unthinkable.

He was not able to sin.

It is only because He was sinless that He is the Saviour !!

We are saved on the basis of our union with Christ :-

Our sins are reckoned to His account. If He had had sins of His own to die for, He could not have been punished for ours. (*Isaiah 53:5-6, 2 Cor 5:21, 1 Pet 2:24, 3:18*)

His righteousness is reckoned to our account. If His life had not been perfectly acceptable to God, we could not be accepted in this way. (*Rom 3:20-22, 5:12-21, 10:4, Eph 1:6.*)

It is because Christ alone is sinless that Acts 4:12 is true :-

"Neither is there salvation in any other for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

Next week we look at the prayer-life of our Lord Jesus Christ.

No. 10 His Prayer-life

Our Lord's deity did not affect the reality of His human nature.
He was entirely dependent on His Father for all - and so He prayed.
In this, and in all else, He has left us a wondrous example.

The posture of His prayers.

Posture is not everything, but it is something.

We read that He prayed :-

standing, (*Matt 14:19, John 11 41-42*)

reclining, (*John 17:1, see 13:23*)

kneeling, (*Luke 22:41*)

and on His face, (*Matt 26:39*)

The place of His prayers.

The solitary place (*Matt 6:6, Mark 1:35, Luke 5:16, 6:12, Matt 14:23*)

In company with others (*Matt 19:13, Luke 9:28, 11:1, John 17*)

The solitary place in company with others ! (*Luke 9:18*)

The occasion of His prayers.

Daily habits, (*Mark 1:35, 6:46*)

At great milestones –

His baptism, (*Luke 3:21-22*)

His choice of the Twelve, (*Luke 6:12-13*)

His revelation of His cross, (*Luke 9:18, 21-22*)

His transfiguration, (*Luke 9:28-36*)

Before great accomplishments :-

feeding miracles, (*Matt 15:36, John 6:11*)

walking on the sea, (*Matt 14:23-33*)

raising of Lazarus, (*John 11:41-42*)

healing of demoniac boy, (*Mark 9:14-29*)

After great accomplishments :-

feeding of 5,000, (*Matt 14:23*)

preaching, exorcising, healing, (*Mark 1:32-35*)

When exceptionally busy, (*Luke 5:15-16, 4:40-42, John 6:15*)

At times of inward agony and sorrow, (*John 6:15, 11:41-42, 12:28, Matt. 26: 36-46*)

At the moment of death, (*Luke 23:46*)

The character of His prayers.

As a Son, (*Matt 11:25, 26:39, John 17:1,11,25*)

With thanksgiving, (*Matt 11:25, 15:36, Luke 22:17,19, John 11:41*)

Never confessing a sin, (*John 8.29*)

The emphasis was on communion with God, (*John 12:27-28, chapter 17*)

There was some petition and supplication, (*Matt 26:39-44, Luke 22:31, 23:34, John 17:9,15,17,20,24*)

And His prayers were always answered, (*John 11:41-42, Matt 26:53, Heb 5:7*)

His prayerfulness made a deep impression on His disciples

They did not ask Him to teach them to preach, or teach, or heal

but " LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY " (*Luke 11:1*).

Next week we look at the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

No. 11 His Deity

WHO WAS JESUS?

God? good? mad? or bad?

The doctrine of Christ's deity is the foundation-stone of Christianity.

Through the centuries both unbelievers and believers have applauded His unique character.

His deity is the historic doctrine of the churches, taught in their creeds.

But it is a truth being freshly attacked today.

WHAT DOES THE SCRIPTURE SAY ?

Old Testament references to Jehovah are, in the New, applied to Christ.

This is inexplicable, if He be not Christ.

Compare :-

Isaiah 40:3	with	Matt 3:3
Eccl 12:14	with	1 Cor 4:5
Psalms 68:18	with	Eph 4:7-8
Psalms 45:6-7	with	Heb 1:8
Psalms 7:9	with	Rev 2:23

Divine attributes are ascribed to Christ.

Eternity	John 1:1-2, Rev 1:8,17-18, 22:13
Omnipotence	Matt 28:18, Phil 3:21
Omniscience	John 2:24, 4:29, 16:30, 21:17, Col 2:3
Omnipresence	Matt 28:19-20
Self-existence	John 1:4, 5:26, Rev 1:8,17, 22:13
Immutability	Heb 13:8.

Divine acts are ascribed to Christ

Creation	John 1:3, Col 1:16, Heb 1:10
Providence	Heb 1:3, Col 1:17
Resurrection	John 5:27-28
Judgement	John 5:27, Matt 25:31
Forgiveness of sin	Col 3:13, Mark 2:7,10.

Divine worship is ascribed to Christ.

Contrast John 2:28 with Rev 22:8-9

See also Heb 1:6 and Rev 5:12-14.

Divine identity is ascribed to Christ

John the Baptist John 1:34

Peter Matt 16:16, 2 Pet 1:16-18

Paul Acts 9:20, 20:28, Rom 9:5, Col 2:9, Tit 2:13

All the apostles John 1:1,14, 1 John 1:1.

Divine claims were made by Christ

For examples of implied claims, see Matt 5:18,20,22, Luke 2:48-9, John 20:30-31

For explicit claims, see John 8:56-59, 17:5, 18:4-6, Matt 26:63-64

Others who have made similar claims have been contradicted by their lives, but the character of Christ supports His claims in every way; and His claims are proved by His resurrection.

MAY WE CALL IN OTHER WITNESSES ?

The witness of the spread of Christianity. This can only be accounted for by the supernatural.
The witness of His transforming power. If He be not the Son of God, how do you explain the fact that after 2,000 years there are millions who would gladly surrender life itself, rather than deny Him ?

We join with Peter to say :-

“We believe and are sure that thou art that Christ,
the Son of the living God.” (*John 6:69*).

Next week we look at the two natures of our Lord Jesus Christ.

No. 12 His Two Natures

“He was, and continues to be, God and man in two distinct natures, and. one person, for ever.”
(Shorter Catechism),

We must not affirm the deity of our Lord while omitting His humanity
We must not affirm the humanity of our Lord while omitting His deity
We call the doctrine summarised above - "the hypostatic union".
We are confronted with the fact that it is :-

Mysterious

1 Timothy 3:16

It is without analogy, anywhere

But the mystery of the subject must not prevent us accepting what God's Word says.

Must the doctrine be rejected simply because it is an impenetrable mystery to finite minds ?

Actual

Whatever it is to be God, Jesus is that, absolutely

He was, and is, equally really man

His humanity and deity were distinct and separate.

Each retained its normal attributes

The divine did not penetrate the human

The human was not absorbed in the divine

Yet the two natures were bound together so as to constitute Him one Person

The God-Man !!

Demonstrable

He did not act sometimes by one nature, and sometimes by the other

He acted in all things as a single Personality

We can attribute to the one Person what is really appropriate to only one of His two natures for
example see 1 Cor 2:8

We should not say that a certain act or saying of His was divine, while another was merely
human

Both proceed from the single Personality of Christ.

We see this clearly in our Lord's words

There is no interchange of "I" and "Thou" between the two natures, such as is recorded of the 3
Persons of the Trinity, (*John 17:23*)

He never used the plural when speaking of Himself.

Yet He speaks of Himself as being in heaven and on earth at the same time

2 natures were so united as to form a single Person

See Romans 1:3-4.

Necessary

Had He been only man, His death would have been of no more value than a martyr's.

Had He been only God, He would have had no real link with humanity, and His death could not have redeemed.

The union of His 2 natures ensures that His atonement avails for men, and yet is infinite in its power.

It also ensures that He is a proper Mediator between God and man

His two natures enable Him to lay hands on both

His deity gives Him equal dignity with God. (*Phil 2:5-11*)

His humanity gives Him perfect sympathy with man. (*Heb 2:17-18, 4:14-16*)

Assured of His human sympathy, we know He is willing to save & help us.

Assured of His deity, we know He is able to save and help us,

He is thus by virtue of the hypostatic union, an ALL SUFFICIENT SAVIOUR FOR SINNERS !

Eternal

The humanity which He has assumed is His for ever

His incarnation is perpetual. He remains 'the Son of Man'. (*Acts 7:56, Matt 25:31*)

In His ascension, humanity attained the throne of the universe. (*Matt 28:18, Acts 9:4-6, Phil 2:9-11*)

He has a bodily form, such as was manifested to the disciples after His resurrection. (*John 20:19-29, Acts 1:9-11*)

It is a literal but glorified body, with all the essential attributes of humanity, but not subject to the natural limitations of life on earth. See 1 Corinthians 15:35-58.

Although we are joint-heirs with Him, we shall never partake of His deity. But we shall have a perfect humanity, receiving a body like His. (*Phil 3:20-21, 1 John 3:1-3*)

Next week we look at the miracles of our Lord Jesus Christ.

No. 13 His Miracles

What is a miracle?

Every event in this universe is, in the end, attributable to God. (*Col 1:16-17, Eph 1:11b, Dan 4:34-35*)

God usually works in a certain way, and we mistakenly call it 'the laws of nature

sometimes He works in a different way :-

it is still consistent with His character

no 'laws' have been broken

but it appears to be more mighty; and is for a reason

we call these "miracles"

a miracle is thus "an extraordinary act of providence"

when God Himself was among us, we are not surprised that He worked such miracles.

What miracles did our Lord Jesus Christ perform ?

He did them by His will, using His word, touch, or spittle. He displayed a note of inherent authority (e.g. Mark 2:9-11), and yet also acted in constant dependence on His Father (e.g. John 5:19).

Apart from the miracles surrounding His birth, His passing through a hostile crowd, the Calvary miracles, and the resurrection and appearances, there are recorded 35 miracles. which Jesus worked :-

17 bodily cures

Nobleman's son; infirm man at Jerusalem; Peter's mother-in-law; a leper; a paralytic; man with withered hand; centurion's servant; two blind men; deaf & dumb man; blind man at Bethsaida; blind man at Jerusalem; woman with 18 years infirmity; woman with issue of blood; man with dropsy; ten lepers; blind Bartimaeus; Malchus' ear

9 miracles over forces of 'nature'

Water to wine; draught of fishes; tempest stilled; 5000 fed walking on water; 4000 fed; tax money; fig tree withered; another draught of fishes.

6 cures of demoniacs

In Capernaum synagogue; blind & dumb demoniac; Gadarene demoniacs; dumb demoniac; Syrophenician daughter; demoniac boy

3 raised from the dead

Jairus' daughter; widow's son at Nain; Lazarus at Bethany

plus countless others

1,32-34, 6:53-56, Luke 4:40, 6:17-19, John 21:25 !!

What was the purpose of these miracles ?

They were NOT mere wonders, intended simply to dazzle people.

The whole method of appealing to men by miracles Jesus had rejected in His temptation. (*Matt 4:1-11*)

He refused to perform useless and spectacular wonders simply to prove His claims. (*Matt 12:38-42, 16:1-4*)

Frequently He told those He had helped to be quiet about a miracle. (*Matt 8:4, Mark 8:6, Luke 8:56*)

The word 'wonder' is never used on its own of Jesus' miracles.

They were NOT just rewards for faith.

Faith is not mentioned at all in connection with some of the miracles. see Mark 1:29-31,32, 5:1-20, Luke 7:11-17, 13:10-17, John 5:1-9 etc..

There is no place for it in the case of Malchus (*Luke 22:50-51*); the man at the pool did not have it, for he promptly betrayed Christ, (*John 5:15*) and dead Lazarus could not have exercised it. (*John 11:43*)

They WERE acts of compassion.

It is said so in the cases of the dumb demoniac (*Matt 9:36*), 5000 (*Matt 14:14*), 4000 (*Matt 15:32*), blind at Jericho (*Matt 20:34*), leper (*Mark 1:41*), Gadarene demoniac (*Mark 5:19*), demoniac boy (*Mark 9:22*), widow at Nain (*Luke 7:13*).

all of our Lord's ministry should be interpreted in the light of Matthew 8:16-17.

They WERE signs.

They pointed people to God. The people who saw them reacted as in the presence of God. (*Mark 1:27, Matt 9:8, Luke 5:26, 7:16, 9:23*)

They demonstrated that Jesus was sent by God - indeed, that He was God.

The highest faith is that which believes without a sign. (*John 20:29*)

Nonetheless, signs have a useful function in bearing witness to Christ, (*John 2:11, 3:2, 9:30, 33*)

And sometimes Jesus appealed to them as proof of His claims (though He rejected spectacular stunts, as we have seen), (*John 5:36, Luke 7:19-23, Mark 2:10-12, John 14:11, 15:24*)

As did His apostles. (*Acts 2:22*)

Next week we look at the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ.

No. 14 His Teaching

"We know that thou art a teacher come from God." (*John 3:2*)

"Never man spake like this man." (*John 7:46*)

He stands as the peerless teacher of the ages.

45 times the Gospels call Him 'Teacher' or 'Master'. see John 13:13

His followers were called disciples, or learners.

His Manner

It was dogmatic.

"I say unto you..." (*John 3:3, 5:24-25*)

"he taught them as one having authority." (*Matt 7:29*)

this authority was repugnant to some, but always unmistakable.

He spoke as a Divine messenger.

It was simple.

NO :- striving after effect : parade of learning : confusing sentences; references to science or philosophy : technical terms : secondary topics : shallow or trivial subjects : misunderstanding of the human mind. (*John 2:25*)

FEW :- theological expressions : speculative or theoretical passages.

MANY :- commonplace illustrations : concise and pointed stories : vivid and lucid sentences : plain and direct statements : repetitions.

A unique combination of simplicity and profundity

"and the common people heard him gladly." (*Mark 12:37*)

It was practical.

When the Sermon began, the application began. He made it pointedly personal.

Everybody knew who the sermon was FOR, and were either enraptured or enraged.

He showed that doctrine must be translated into holy living.

It is not enough to 'talk the walk'. We must 'walk the talk',

He did not scale down His demands to meet the limitations of sinful human nature.

Our Lord's method, then, was - State : Illustrate : Apply

For an excellent example of this, see Matthew 6:24:34.

His matter

God.

God the Father - He had come to reveal Him, and spoke about Him constantly.

God the Son - He sought to reveal both the fact and the meaning of His coming death and resurrection.

God the Holy Spirit - Teaching about His Person and ministry assumed increasing prominence as the time of His departure drew nearer.

The kingdom of God - He mentioned this 78 times, on 30 occasions, He stressed that God rules over all, Yet He has a spiritual kingdom, where Christ reigns in the heart of the believer. He spoke of this kingdom's nature, growth, and consummation.

Godliness

Salvation - Typical themes are the reality and wickedness of sin the necessity and availability of righteousness : repentance conversion; the new birth : eternal life begun now : the end of the world : the judgement : heaven and hell.

Edification - He spoke about the nature of true worship : true and counterfeit faith: distinctive Christian behaviour : the believer's privileges : the believer's responsibilities to God, fellow-believers, others, himself, the state etc...

" And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth," (*Luke 4:22*)

Next week we look at the humility of our Lord Jesus Christ.

No. 15 His Humility

"I am meek and lowly in heart." (*Matt 11:29*)

He had humility within; spoke of it often; and was a living example of it.

The world despises it.

No ancient philosopher considered humility to be a virtue; but a vice

They had no word for it: only a word for 'faint-hearted', or 'mean spirited'.

The Lord Jesus Christ showed humility to be a primary virtue

It is the opposite of the first and greatest sin - pride

His teaching on the subject was radical. (*Luke 9:48, 14:11*)

His disciples found it all but impossible to look upon humility as something to be desired, and not despised.

Yet the world still confuses meekness with weakness, and lowliness with 'an inferiority complex'

It applauds those who seek attention, or strive after effect

It considers the humble to be insignificant.

He exemplified it.

"He made himself of no reputation... humbled himself." (*Phil 2:7-8*)

Became "the carpenter's son." (*Matt 13:55*)

Poor. (*2 Cor 8:9*)

A servant. (*Luke 22:27*)

A suffering servant! (*Luke 12:50*), yet see *Is 53:7*.

In complete subordination to His Father. (*John 5:19, 30, 7:16, 28, 8:28, 50*)

Lovingly serving men, because He liked to do so. (*Matt 20:28, John 13:1-17*)

Yet all the time conscious of His divine origin and nature, and accepting men's worship as His due. (*John 13:1, Luke 7:38*)

We should pursue it.

His washing of the disciples' feet is specifically said to have been an example. (*John 13:15*)

We should carefully consider the following references, each of which teaches us that God's way up is down.

Matt 5:3-5

Matt 11:29

Matt 18:1-4

Luke 9:46-48

Luke 14:7-11

Luke 22:24-27

“In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.
Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.
Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus...” (*Philippians 2:3-5*)

Next week we look at the transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ.

No. 16 His Transfiguration

This was one of the most astonishing experiences of our Lord on earth
The full glory of the Godhead was permitted to blaze forth
It is recorded in Matthew 17:1-8, Mark 9:2-10, Luke 9:28-36.

Where ?

Almost certainly Mt. Hermon in the north, not Mt. Tabor near Nazareth this fits the facts better
(*Mark 8:27, 9:2, 30, 33, 10:1*)

Mt. Tabor was capped with a fortified city.

Mt. Hermon is higher, and known for its rapid cloud formations (*Mark 9:7*)

Only three intimates were present : probably at night. (*Luke 9:32*)

Years later they were still filled with awe and wonder. (*John 1:14, 2 Pet 1:16-18*)

Why ?

The incident must have meant much to the Lord Himself.

The voice of His Father again confirmed His divine Sonship. (*Matt 16:16, 17:5*)

Moses & Elijah conversed with Him about His cross. (*Luke 9:32*)

His disciples were spiritually dull, and after such an absence of sympathy, the experience must have done much to nerve and fortify the Lord for the ordeal ahead.

The incident meant much to His disciples.

Before them He was transfigured: to them the voice came. (*Mark 9:2, Matt 17:5*)

His predictions of His cross were confirmed, in a glorious way. (*Luke 9:30-31*)

His essential deity was displayed, so as to dispel doubt. (*2 Pet 1:16-18*)

It was clear He was not speaking empty words when He spoke of resurrection, and meeting the saints in glory.

They also received a pledge of their own immortality.

And the pre-eminence of Christ was made plain. (*Matt 17:8*)

What ?

The three disciples were granted a threefold vision :-

1. A vision of His glory.

The impression of glory was overcoming. (*Matt 17:2, Mk 9:3, Luke 9:29*)

Some actual physical change took place as our Lord prayed.

The change came from within - it was not merely external.

There was dazzling whiteness, and blazing light.

No wonder Peter wanted the experience perpetuated!!

2. A vision of His cross.

The glorious conversation was about Christ's decease or 'exodus' (*Luke 9:31*)

The cross is foolishness to the unregenerate (*1 Cor 1:23*), but not to heaven's inhabitants!

Both Moses and Elijah had had an unusual 'Exodus'.

They represent the Law, and the prophets

Both point to Christ, and acknowledge Him as supreme.

The cross is central to them both; and is the talk of heaven.

The transfiguration helps us to see the cross from the viewpoint of heaven.

3. A vision of His coming.

The transfiguration is a foretaste and a foreshadowing of our Lord's second coming. (*2 Pet 1:16*)

It was a momentary glimpse of the final setting-up of Christ's kingdom. (*Luke 9:27*)

As He appeared on the mount - so He will come again. (*Rev 1:7, Matt 25:31, 2 Thess 1:7-10*)

Those of whom Moses and Elijah were representatives will then enter into their eternal bliss. (*1 Thess 4:13-18, 1 Cor 15:51-58*)

The pre-eminence of Christ, seen on the mount, will then be seen fully and eternally. (*Luke 9:27, 1 Cor 15:22-28*)

Next week we look at the agony of our Lord Jesus Christ.

No. 17 His Agony

The place.

The garden of Gethsemane - the oil press - still exists

Christ's prayer there was in stark contrast to that of John chapter 17

He withdrew from His intimates, and prayed alone

His agony in prayer is recorded in Matt 26:36-46, Mark 14:32-42, Luke 22:39-46

Immediately afterwards He was arrested.... tried... crucified.

The experience.

This is described in six statements, using intense language. Each describes a different facet of His suffering.

We understand but little: and reverently examine the sacred record.

He became "exceeding sorrowful" (*Matt 26:38*), pressed upon. He experienced sorrow of the utmost intensity.

He "began to be sore amazed" (*Mark 14:33*) Terrified surprise. He was overwhelmed and awed as He saw the ingredients of the cup. Its terrors exceeded His anticipations.

He was "very heavy" (*Matt 26:37, Mark 14:33*). Confused, restless, 'away from home'.

He was "exceeding sorrowful unto death" (*Matt 26:38*). His anguish was unfathomable, and His physical frame unable to bear it. An angel was sent to infuse new strength. (*Luke 22:43*)

He was 'in an agony' (*Luke 22:44*). A conflict such as He had never before experienced. He prayed more earnestly, even "with strong crying; and tears." (*Heb 5:7*)

He sweated "as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (*Luke 22:44*). The sufferings of the God-Man are clothed with mystery. There is no parallel between them and the sufferings of the martyrs.

The reasons

Not the fear of death, but :-

1. The renewed attack of Satan.

It was an unprecedented hour of darkness. (*Luke 22:53*)

But He was not deflected from the way of the Cross.

2. The anticipated bearing of His people's sin.

This was the purpose of the Cross. (*Is 53:6, 1 Pet 2:21-24, 3:18*)

He was to be made sin: to become a curse. (*2 Cor 5:21, Gal 3:13*)

He would drink the cup of wrath without mercy

His holy nature shrank, not from death as death, but from the cursed death which was the punishment for His people's sin, imputed to Him.

3. The anticipated turning-away of His Father's face.

He enjoyed perfect fellowship with His Father. (*John 10:30*)

Soon He would be cut off from Him. (*Matt 27:46*)

the anticipation of this was the soul of His agony.

The outcome.

He was heard! (*Heb 5:7, John 11:42*)

The cup revolted Him. But He was not trying to escape it. He had consistently taught that it was inevitable. (*John 3:14, Matt 16:21*)

He prayed that the Father's will would be done, and that there would be no deflection, or falling short. His prayer was answered. (*Acts 2:23, Phil 2:8*)

“Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.” (*Acts 13:38-39*)

Next week we look at the trial of our Lord Jesus Christ.

No. 18 His Trial

All the legal proceedings were irregular and the verdict unjust.

The Jewish proceedings

The arrest

This was illegal because :-

it took place after sunset

through a bribed traitor. (*Ex 23:8*)

some of the judges taking part

The trials

There were three, before Annas, Caiaphas, and the Sanhedrin

Each took place before the morning sacrifice - and was therefore illegal

Other illegalities included

Annas and Caiaphas sitting alone. (*Deut 19:16-18*)

Requirement for 2 or 3 witnesses ignored. (*Deut 17:6*)

Caiaphas tried to get Christ to incriminate Himself. (*Matt 26:63*)

24 hours did not elapse between the trial and the verdict.

The court was held in secret; and on a feast day.

The judges themselves brought the charge of blasphemy

The witnesses were known perjurers, unsworn, & contradictory. (*Matt 26:59-60, Deut 19:16-21*)

Jesus was struck before any charge was proved. (*John 18:22*)

The verdict.

The judges unanimously condemned Jesus on His own unsupported testimony. (*Deut 17:6*)

The high priest tore his garments, in defiance of - Lev 21:10

The Lord's words were distorted, & His defence unheard. (*John 2:19-21, Matt 26:60, 19:15*)

The voting was not individual, but simultaneous. (*Matt 26:66*)

The Jewish proceedings were full of prejudice, fraud, and illegality.

The religious leaders were determined to secure a conviction at all costs, whether the evidence demanded it or not.

The Roman proceedings

Before Pilate

Pilate came out to listen to Jewish charges. (*John 18:24-29*)

these were now changed from blasphemy to sedition. (*Luke 23:2*)

Pilate illegally tried to make the prisoner incriminate Himself. (*John 18:34-37*)

But ended by declaring His innocence. (*John 18:38, Luke 23:4*)

Before Herod

The verdict should have led to the immediate release of Jesus

But the vacillating Pilate heeded a new torrent of accusations, *(Luke 23:5)*

He sent Jesus to Herod, who had authority over Palestine. *(Luke 23:6-7)*

Jesus hurt his royal pride by performing no miracle before him. *(Luke 23:8)*

No evidence of guilt was forthcoming.

After mocking Jesus, Herod returned Him to Pilate. *(Luke 23:9-11)*

Pilate and Herod now became firm friends. *(Luke 23:12)*

Before Pilate again.

Pilate resorted to every device to release Jesus. *(Luke 23:13-25)*

Yet he was sensitive concerning his own position at Rome. *(John 19:12)*

The Jews would not be appeased, preferring Barabbas to Jesus. *(Matt 27:20-23)*

At last the true charge surfaced. *(John 19:7)*

Pilate washed his hands of the affair; the Jews accepted full responsibility. *(Matt 27:24-25)*

Jesus was declared innocent; yet mocked & tortured. *(Matt 27:26-31)*

And then delivered to be crucified.

Yet Pilate insisted on a certain superscription. *(John 19:19-22)*

The Lord Jesus Christ was not condemned on any legal grounds. He was acquitted three times yet sentenced to death.

His claim to be the Son of God, the Messiah, was intolerable, and this was the real reason for His murder.

This continues to be the real reason why men and women despise and reject Him today.

Next week we look at the silence of our Lord Jesus Christ.

No. 19 His Silence

“a time to keep silence, and a time to speak.” (*Eccl. 3:6*)

Throughout the irregularities of His six trials, our Lord maintained the dignified calm and loving forbearance which had always characterised Him.

Sometimes He remained silent, sometimes He spoke. what principles governed His actions?

A time to keep silence.

Our Lord remained silent

When He was falsely accused.

When He was the object of curiosity, entertainment, or scorn.

When falsely accused before the Sanhedrin. (*Mark 14:55-6a*)

When unjustly treated there. (*Matt 26:67-68, Luke 22:63-65*)

When falsely accused before Pilate. (*Matt 27:12-14*)

When sent to Herod. (*Luke 23:6-12*)

When tortured before His crucifixion. (*Matt 27:26-30*)

When finally questioned by Pilate. (*John 19:5-9*)

Now let us read 1 Peter 2:21-23, and take to heart these principles.

A time to speak.

Our Lord spoke :-

When it was feasible that His questioner was seeking the truth.

When to remain silent would have been misleading.

When Caiaphas opened his investigation. (*John 18:19-23*)

When put under oath before the Sanhedrin. (*Matt 26:62-65*)

When Pilate opened his investigation. (*Matt 27:11, John 18:33-38*)

When Pilate made it plain that he thought Christ was in his hands. (*John 19:10-11*)

Let us also take to heart these principles.

Ephesians 5:1 !!

Next week we look at the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

No. 20 His Cross

The Cross was not an incident in Christ's life - but the purpose of it.

It was an at-one-ment.

The principle of atonement runs through the whole Bible.

What men say about the atonement.

The example theory :- as we follow His example all hindrances to our communion with God will be removed.

The moral influence theory :- by His sacrificial life He unloosed a power within us.

The governmental theory :- God is not wounded by our sins, but Christ was punished just so God's government might be upheld.

The identification theory :- Sin, suffering and death are in the way of our fellowship with God, so Christ took them upon Himself.

What we must remember as we consider the atonement.

You cannot separate God from His law.

He Himself is personally affronted by sin. It offends Him. (*Rom 1:18*)

Any atonement must render satisfaction to His nature. He demands appeasement.

The Deity of Christ meant He was able to give to God what He demanded.

There is a debt to pay. He paid it. Redemption. (*1Pet 1:18-20*)

There is a penalty to bear. He bore it. Propitiation. (*Rom 3:25, see also Gal 3:13*)

His true humanity entitled Him to offer Himself as a Substitute.

Humanity sinned, and humanity must pay.

He was sinless, and qualified to take the sinner's place. Sacrifice. (*Heb 10:12 see also 1 Pet 2:21-24*)

This is how reconciliation was effected ! *Rom 5:10, 2 Cor 5:20.*

Some other important points to be clear about

It was planned in eternity. (*1 Pet 1:19-20, Rev 13:8 17:8*)

It took place in time. (*John 19:16-18*)

Its results are retrospective & prospective and eternal. (*Heb 9:15, 5:9*)

It was for a definite people. (*John 10.11,26-30*)

“HIMSELF for ME”

Gal 2:20

Next week we look at resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

No. 21 His Resurrection

An important fact.

To remove the resurrection is to remove the keystone of Christianity

Without it -

We cannot preach a living Saviour

Our faith has no factual basis

The Scriptures are untrue

The Lord was evidently mistaken, and is discredited

We can hold out no future hope

see 1 Corinthians 15:14-19

A denied fact.

"The resurrection is not denied because the evidence is regarded as insufficient, but the evidence is rejected and repudiated because the resurrection is denied." (W. Graham Scroggie).

Some deny it outright "I would not believe Jesus rose, even if I saw it." (Ernest Renan).

Some deny it more subtly. "There is no living Christ who is a divine person, he is present only where the Word that testifies of Him is proclaimed" (Rudolf Bultmann).

A fact - nonetheless.

The evidence will stand up easily in a court of law.

The grave was empty.

None of the other explanations hold water - wrong tomb, swoon, thieves, disciples stole body, authorities stole body.

The graveclothes were undisturbed.

The Lord was seen on ten separate occasions.

The records do not have the characteristics of hallucinations nor the characteristics of inventions.

The disciples were changed.

Take Peter, for example, or James, the Lord's brother.

The very existence of the Christian church is tangible evidence .

The witness of Paul confirms it.

The Lord's Day stems from it.

The Lord is risen indeed ! (*Luke 24:34*)

A significant fact.

It declares to the world that Christ really is the Son of God. (*Acts 13:33, 2:24, Rom 1:4*)

It means that the salvation of believers has been definitely secured. (*Rom 4:25, 8:34, Phil 3:10*)

It makes believers certain of their future hope. (*1 Pet 1:3, 1 Cor 15:20, 23, Phil 3:21*)

It assures all people everywhere that the world will be judged. (*Acts 17:31*)

It illustrates that the last word is always with God. (*Acts 2:22-24*)

Next week we look at the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ.

No. 22 His Ascension

The forty days

There were forty days between our Lord's resurrection and His ascension. Acts 1:1-8 gives us the most information about that period.

The forty days had :-

1. An evidential value
Giving incontrovertible evidence that the Lord really was alive
2. An explanatory value
He spoke about the nature of His kingdom
He explained the nature of the apostolic mission
He revealed the source of His, and their, power
3. An evangelistic value
He enthused His followers with evangelistic passion
the ten - John 20:21
the Seven - John 21: 1-12
the eleven - Luke 24:44-53
the whole band - Matt 28:16-20.
4. An eschatological value
He promised His presence to the end of the age. (*Matt 28:20*)

The ascension

This is recorded in Mark 16:19, Luke 24:50-53, Acts 1:9-12, but referred to by eleven other New Testament books.

Its manner

in broad daylight - visibly - bodily

at Bethany

to convince the disciples that they need not expect any reappearances, such as they had witnessed in the last few days

Its necessity

His resurrection body could not be permanently at home here

His holy life and character made the ascension appropriate

His redemptive work required such a consummation

His gift of the Holy Spirit depended on it. (*John 7:37-39*)

His disciples could now explain why the grave was empty, but the Lord not seen

Its significance

It displaced the fact that His work was accepted, and His claims to deity justified. (*Phil 2:9-11*)

It inaugurated Him into His heavenly priesthood. (*Heb 2:17-18*)

It constituted Him Head of the Church. (*Eph 1:20-23, 4:8*)

It assures believers of their own ascension (*John 14:2,19*)

It causes them to understand the nature of His kingdom, and excites in them an expectancy of His advent. (*Phil 3:20-21*)

Next week we look at the intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ.

No. 23 His Intercession

Job lamented : "There is no umpire between us, who might lay his hand upon us both." (*Job 9:33*)

Paul rejoiced: "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." (*1 Tim 2:5*)

Christ's qualifications.

The qualifications required for a high priest are set out in Hebrews 5:1-2.

fellowship with man - taken from among them, and able to have a moderating feeling towards them.

authority from God - not self-appointed.

Christ satisfies both requirements.

See Heb 2:17 and 5:4-6.

Further, He was morally and spiritually qualified. (*Heb 7:25-26*)

Christ's capabilities

Able to succour:- that is, to provide all necessary help. This is because He Himself suffered. (*Heb 2:17-18*)

Able to sympathise:- able to enter all our experiences. (*Heb 4:15-16*) He does not condone our sin, but sympathises with our weaknesses.

Able to save:- and to keep on saving, because His high-priestly ministry is constant and endless. (*Heb 7:24-25*)

Christ's intercession.

1. His intercession is silent.

He appears as our Advocate

not to appeal for clemency, with agonising entreaty and tearful supplication.

but to Claim justice

to claim what we are entitled to by virtue of Calvary.

1 John 1:8 - 2:2, Rom 8:34, Heb 9:24, 10:12-14

Five bleeding wounds He bears,
Received on Calvary,
They pour effectual prayers,
They strongly plead for me.
Forgive him, O forgive, they cry,
Nor let the ransomed sinner die
(Charles Wesley).

2. His intercession is personal; and perpetual.

Hebrews 7:25

Romans 5:10

3. His intercession is availing.

Sinners may approach the throne !

Their prayers are heard there !

John 14:6, Heb 10:18-22, Rev 5:8.

“We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.” (Heb 8:1)

Next week we look at the advent of our Lord Jesus Christ.

No. 24 His Advent

He Himself promised it. (*John 14:3*)

The prophets promised it. (*Dan 7:13, Zech 14:5*)

The apostles promised it. (*Acts 3:19-20*)

The Lord's Supper promises it. (*1 Cor 11:26*)

Early Christian greetings promised it. (*1 Cor 16:22*)

When

Only the Father knows that. He will send Him at the last time. (*Mark 13:32, Acts 3:21*)

He will come when least expected. (*Matt 24:27, 44, 1 Thess 5:2-3*)

The world will be caught unawares, but Christians need not be. (*Matt 24:48, 1 Thess 5:4-5*)

We can see the Day approaching. The Lord is at hand. (*Heb 10:25, Phil 4:5*)

If He appears to delay, it is because He is being merciful to those who are still unrepentant. (*2 Pet 3:9*)

How

In the same way as He went, (*Acts 1:9-11*) from heaven, visibly, gloriously, bodily.

With the glory of His Father, and His angels. (*Matt 16:27*)

With all His saints, in flaming fire. (*1 Thess 3:13, 2 Thess 1:8*)

Our salvation will not be complete until He returns. (*Heb 9:28, 1 Pet 1:5, 13*)

Our bodies will be raised from the dead. (*Rom 8:11, 1 Cor 15*)

And we will take on the likeness of Christ. (*Phil 3:21, 1 John 3:2*)

Christ will gather us to Himself. (*2 Thess 2:1*)

No believer will be left out. (*1 Thess 4:13-18*)

A glorious harvest ! (*Rev 14:14-16*)

What will happen

At His return, Christ will call all men to account. (*Luke 12:40-48*)

Christians will be included in this. (*2 Cor 5:10*) (but see *Rom 8:1, 1 Cor 3:13-14*)

Open actions, secret things, and even thoughts will be judged (*1 Cor 4:5*)

Those who do not obey the Gospel will suffer terribly. (*2 Thess 1:7-9*)

But believers will go to be with Christ for ever. (*John 14:2-3, 1 Thess 4:17*)

The present world Set-up will be over. (*1 Pet 4:7, 2 Pet 3:10*)

The physical universe will be dissolved. (*2 Pet 3:7, 10-12*)

A new heavens and new earth will then be revealed. (*2 Pet 3:13*)

What God's Word has spoken will have come to pass. (*Acts 3:21*)

Our Lord Jesus Christ will be vindicated. (*Phil 2:5-11*)

Christ will put all things under His feet, and then subject Himself to His Father, that God may be all in all. (*1 Cor 15:24-28*)

How does this apply to us

Unbelievers may scoff, but they will soon be put to shame. (*2 Pet 3:3-10*)

We should love this truth, expect Him, and long for Him. (*1 Pet 1:13, Rev 22:20*)

We should live in a holy way. (*1 Pet 4:7-11, 2 Pet 3:11-12, 1 John 3:3*)

We should always be ready, remembering that the time is short. (*Mark 13:32-37, 1 Cor 7:29-31*)

“Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless.” (*2 Peter 3:14*)