

THE EQUIP INSTITUTE

Theme: Christian Belief

Topic: Person of Christ, Part 1

Spring 2024

Introduction

The Equip Institute exists to equip members of Taylors First Baptist Church to think rightly about God and His Word for the sake of living rightly before God in His world. This is the first of two sessions that will focus on the Person of Christ.

What is the Big Idea?

Aside from the Trinity, there is no more foundational Christian doctrine than Christology, or the person and work of Jesus Christ. Christians believe Jesus of Nazareth is simultaneously both God and man, a mystery we can't fully wrap our minds around but that we believe the Bible teaches.

Jesus is the eternal Son of God who became incarnate as a human man. He is the promised Messiah of Israel and the Savior of all who believe, whether they are Jew or Gentile. He was conceived miraculously by the virgin Mary, lived a fully sinless life of perfect obedience to God the Father, was crucified on a cross, and was then raised bodily from the dead.

What do the Scriptures Say?

The Old Testament

The Law

A human son will crush Satan and presumably conquer sin. (Gen 3:14-15)

God promises to bless the nations through Abraham and makes a special covenant with Abraham and his descendants. (Gen 17:1-8; cf. Gen 12:1-3)

Through Abraham's grandson Jacob (Israel), God pronounces a blessing on Jacob's second son Judah, positioning him as the symbolic firstborn son and promising that one of Judah's descendants will rule all the peoples of the world. (Gen 49:8-10)

God raises up Moses to deliver the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. Moses then prophesies that God will raise up a future prophet from within Israel whom the Jews must obey. (Deut 18:15, 18–19).

The Law teaches that God will raise up a human son of Jewish ethnicity from Judah’s lineage. This son will be a prophet and a king. God will bless all nations through this son-prophet-king. He will destroy the enemy.

The Prophets

This figure will be a king from the line of David and will ultimately rule the whole world. (2 Sam 7:12–16; Isa 9:6–7)

The son-prophet-king will be born of a virgin in Bethlehem. But his birth will not be his beginning—he existed from before the world’s foundation. These passages mark the first clear evidence that there will be something miraculous about this coming figure. (Isa 7:14; Micah 5:2)

The Prophets teach that the son-prophet-king will be a descendant of David who will be conceived without sexual intercourse, born in Bethlehem, and will rule all the nations of the world. This figure has existed from all eternity.

The Writings

Psalm 2 speaks of the Lord’s “anointed” or “chosen” one who will reign over all the nations and claims that he will be the Lord’s Son.

Psalm 16 speaks of the Lord’s “Holy One” who will not rot in the grave. The New Testament writers see this as a prophecy of Jesus’ resurrection. (See Acts 2:25–28, 31; 13:35–37)

Psalm 22 speaks of a righteous sufferer who will be forsaken by God and will suffer greatly, only to be restored and proclaim God’s name to the ends of the Earth. Jesus identifies himself with this righteous sufferer while he is hanging on the cross. (See Matt 27:46; Mark 15:34)

Psalm 110 speaks of the Davidic king who is also a priest. This son-prophet-priest-king will defeat God’s enemies and sit at God’s right hand.

Also in the Writings, Daniel speaks of a figure like a “son of man” who will rule all the nations in a kingdom that will last forever. (Dan 7:13–14)

The Old Testament tells us about a figure who is a human son, of Jewish ethnicity, from the tribe of Judah, a descendant of David, who will be born of a virgin in Bethlehem, who will conquer Satan, who will be a prophet, who will be a priest, who will be a king who rules an eternal kingdom comprised of all the nations of the earth, who will rise from the dead, who is the son of God, who existed in eternity before his physical birth.

Key New Testament Passages

John 1:1–18

The Word was present from the very beginning, was alongside God, and yet the Word was also God. This figure was the agent through whom God created all things. He was the Son of God who was sent by God to dwell among men. In fact, He took upon himself humanity, though without ceasing to be God. His ministry was superior to that of Moses. He was rejected by a majority of those whom He created, including His fellow Jews. But anyone who believed in Him rather than rejecting Him received eternal life and was adopted into God’s spiritual family.

Two key aspects of John 1:1–18 for further reflection: (1) the meaning of “Word” (Gk = *logos*) and (2) the idea that God has come to dwell among His people.

Philippians 2:5–11

Jesus was in the form of God, but in humility He chose not to claim His equality with God. Instead, He became a servant by being born as a man and serving humanity through His obedient death on a cross. Because of this humble servanthood, God has elevated Jesus by giving Him the highest of names. Every living creature will one day bow to Jesus and confess that He is Yahweh, which will glorify the Father.

Verse 7: Jesus's emptying Himself refers to His humble decision to not exercise all the prerogatives of His divine identity but instead to fully identify with His human creatures through the incarnation.

Colossians 1:15-20

Jesus is the image of the invisible God. The invisible God is clearly visible in Jesus. He is the firstborn of all creation and the one who created all things for His own glory. He existed before creation and He sustains His creation. He is also the head of the church, which is called His body. He is the first to rise again from the dead and because of His resurrection He reigns supreme in the universe. All that is true of God is true of Jesus, who is reconciling all creation to Himself through His saving work on the cross.

This passage is controversial because Unitarians say it teaches that Jesus is the first and greatest of God's creatures. But see Psa 89:27 which refers to David as Jesse's "firstborn" even though David was Jesse's youngest son.

Hebrews 1:1-4

God speaks through His Son in the same way He once spoke through the prophets. The Son is the agent of creation and the heir of all things. He is the "radiance" of God's glory, meaning God's glory shines brightest in Him. He is the exact imprint of God's nature, meaning that what is true of God is true of the Son. He sustains the universe by the word of His power, which is also how He created the universe in the first place. After offering Himself up as a sacrifice for sin, He was seated at God's right hand, which in ancient cultures was the place of highest honor where one co-rules with the king. He is superior to the angels because His name is greater than their name.

Other New Testament Texts

The first chapters of Matthew and Luke indicate Jesus was born of a virgin, which was promised in Isaiah 7:14.

The second chapters of Matthew and Luke indicate Jesus was born in Bethlehem, which was promised in Micah 5:2.

The genealogies of Jesus found in Matthew 1 and Luke 3 claim Jesus descended from Abraham, Judah, and

David—he was tied to these three men’s bloodlines in Genesis 17:1–8, Genesis 49:8–10, and 2 Samuel 7:12–16.

Romans 16:20 and Revelation 20:7–10 mention Jesus’s defeat of Satan, which was promised in Genesis 3:15.

Hebrews chapters 5–7 argue that Jesus is a high priest from the order of Melchizedek, which was promised in Psalm 110:4.

In the Gospels, Jesus regularly uses the title “son of man,” which tied him to the promised figure in Daniel 7:13–14 (e.g. Matt. 18:11; Mark 2:27–28; John 8:28).

There is absolutely no doubt that the Gospel writers, Paul, and the author of Hebrews all understood Jesus to be the fulfillment of the eternal sin-conquering son-prophet-king-priest who was promised in the Old Testament. If we believe the Scriptures are trustworthy, we too should believe that Jesus is who the Scriptures say He is.

Recommended Resources

Stephen J. Wellum, *God the Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ* (Crossway, 2016).

Stephen J. Wellum, *The Person of Christ: An Introduction* (Crossway, 2021).

Daniel L. Akin, *Christology: The Study of Christ* (Rainer Publishing, 2015).

Gregg Allison, *Jesusology: Understand What You Believe About Jesus and Why* (B&H, 2005).

Darrell Bock and Benjamin Simpson, *Jesus according to Scripture: Restoring the Portrait from the Gospels*, 2nd ed. (Baker Academic, 2021).

Marvin Pate, *40 Questions About the Historical Jesus* (Kregel Academic, 2015).

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

North Greenville University will host its annual Christian Worldview Week this year on March 4–6. The theme for this year is “Thinking Christianly about Human Nature.” The speakers are theologian Katie McCoy (Texas Baptists) and ethicist Jason Thacker (Boyce College). The public is invited to the evening lectures on March 4–5, 2024. Each lecture is at 7:00pm in Hamlin Recital Hall on the NGU Campus. The lectures will be approximately 45 minutes, followed by 30 minutes of Q&A from the audience.

March 4: Katie McCoy, “Clarity and Compassion for a Gender-Confused Generation”

March 5: Jason Thacker, “Following Jesus in a Digital Age: How Technology Shapes the Christian Life”