

Christian Foundations

A Christian Foundations Series

Revised June 2015

**Pastor Keith Hassell
Grace Fellowship
P.O. Box 260
Rusk, Texas 75785**

This belongs to: _____

Christian Foundations

A Christian Foundations Series

Table of Contents

Lesson 1	Who is Jesus?	3
Lesson 2	Salvation and the New Birth	14
Lesson 3	True Repentance	22
Lesson 4	Faith toward God	29
Lesson 5	The Lordship of Christ	36
Lesson 6	Discipleship	41
Lesson 7	Baptism in Water	48
Lesson 8	Baptism with the Holy Spirit	55
Lesson 9	Baptism with Fire	64
Lesson 10	The Bible	70
Lesson 11	Prayer	79
Lesson 12	Worship	85
Lesson 13	Laying on of Hands	92
Lesson 14	Resurrection from the Dead	99
Lesson 15	Eternal Judgment	105
Lesson 16	The Church	114

Unless stated otherwise, all Scripture Quotations in this lesson series are from the Holy Bible, New King James Version, Copyright 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

Christian Foundations

Lesson 1

Who Is Jesus?

This lesson belongs to: _____

Lesson 1

Who Is Jesus?

Key Verse: *"But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches any other Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it!" 2 Corinthians 11:3-4*

Purpose: The purpose of this lesson is to help the disciple gain a Scriptural understanding of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Introduction

Throughout history people have attempted to give the Jesus of the Bible a "makeover" to fit their own religious beliefs and personal biases. Everyone seems to have an opinion about "Jesus". A search of the bookstores and internet reveals endless differing portrayals of Jesus. Does it really matter what a person or a religious sect believes and teaches about Jesus as long as they claim to believe in "Jesus"?

The Way, Truth, and Life

In John 14:6, Jesus says, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."* Jesus claimed to be the only way to the Father. In regard to our salvation, we are never called upon to believe in a certain teaching, philosophy, worldview, religion, or cultural preference to obtain eternal life. We are called to believe in a Person. That Person is Jesus Christ. Truth is not a teaching; Truth is a Person! Once we receive Jesus as TRUTH Himself, then all that He teaches is truth by virtue of that reality. Therefore the question, "Who is Jesus?" is of utmost importance. Who Jesus is determines the framework from which to interpret all that He says. If we get the Person and Work of Jesus wrong, then it matters not what else we get right.

1. It is important to believe in the _____ Jesus.

Many religions embrace a "Jesus" who is very different from the Jesus of the Bible. Compare just a few common beliefs about Jesus held today [from a pamphlet entitled "Christianity, Cults, & Religions" (Rose Publishing, Torrance, CA)]:

- **Biblical Christianity:** Jesus is God, the second Person of the Trinity. He has always existed and was never created. He is fully God and fully man. As the second Person of the Trinity He is coequal with God the Father and the Holy Spirit. As a man He was begotten by the Holy Spirit through the virgin Mary. Jesus is the only way to the Father, salvation, and eternal life. He died physically on the cross according to the plan of God. He rose from the dead on the third day with a physical but immortal glorified body. His disciples physically touched His wounds and He ate real food with them. For the next 40 days He was seen by over 500 eyewitnesses. He physically ascended to the right hand of the Father in Heaven from where He will come again visibly and physically at the end of the world to establish His kingdom and judge the world.
- **Mormonism:** Jesus is a separate God from the Father (Elohim). He was created as a spirit child by the Father and Mother in Heaven, and is the "elder brother" of all men and spirit beings. His body was created through a sexual union between Elohim and Mary. Jesus was married.
- **Jehovah Witnesses:** Jesus is not God. Before he lived on earth, he was Michael, the archangel. Jehovah made the universe through him. On earth he was a man who lived a perfect life. After dying on a stake (not a cross), he was resurrected as a spirit; his body was destroyed. Jesus is not coming again; he "returned" invisibly in 1914 in spirit. Very soon, he and the angels will destroy all non-Jehovah's Witnesses.

- **Oneness Pentecostalism:** The "Oneness Doctrine" ("modalism") denies the doctrine of Christ in Biblical and early Christianity. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not "Persons" within the Godhead, but are different "manifestations" of God. Jesus is the Father and thus, the Father is Jesus. The "Son of God" has not always existed, refers to the flesh body of Jesus on the earth, and is not eternal. As the Father, Jesus sent himself as the Son, prayed to himself as the Father, was obedient to himself as the Father, died on the cross as the Son, was exalted back to himself as the Father, and sent Himself again as the Holy Spirit. In order to be saved one must believe that Jesus is the Father, be water baptized specifically "in the name of Jesus", and "receive the Holy Ghost" with the evidence of speaking in other tongues.
- **Christian Science:** Jesus was not the Christ, but a man who displayed the Christ idea. ("Christ" means perfection, not a person.) Jesus was not God, and God can never become man or flesh. He did not suffer and could not suffer for sins. He did not die on the cross. He was not resurrected physically. He will not literally come back.
- **Scientology:** Jesus is rarely mentioned in Scientology. Jesus was not the Creator, and not an "operating thetan" (in control of supernatural powers, cleared from mental defects). Jesus did not die for sins.
- **New Age:** Jesus is not the one true God. He is not a savior but a spiritual model, and guru, and is now an "ascended master." He was a New Ager who tapped into divine power in the same way that anyone can. Many believe he went east to India or Tibet and learned mystical truths. He did not rise physically, but "rose" into a higher spiritual realm.
- **Judaism:** Jesus is seen either as an extremist false messiah or a good but martyred Jewish rabbi (teacher). Judaism does not recognize Jesus to be the Messiah, the Son of God, and they do not believe that he rose from the dead.
- **Hinduism:** Jesus is a teacher, a guru, or an incarnation of Vishnu. He is a son of God as are others. His death does not atone for sins and he did not rise from the dead.
- **Hare Krishna:** Jesus is not important. He is usually thought of as an enlightened vegetarian teacher who taught meditation. He is not an incarnation of God. Some hold that Christ is Krishna.
- **Transcendental Meditation (T.M.):** Jesus is not uniquely God. Like all persons, Jesus had a divine essence. Unlike most, he discovered it. Christ didn't suffer and couldn't suffer for people's sins.
- **Buddhism:** Jesus is not part of this belief. Buddhists in the West generally view Jesus as an enlightened man.
- **Islam:** Jesus is one of up to 124,000 prophets sent by God to various cultures. Abraham, Moses, and Muhammad are others. Jesus was born of a virgin but is not the Son of God. He was sinless but was not divine or God Himself. He was not crucified (he ascended to heaven without dying). He is referred to as messiah and ayatollah. Jesus will return in the future to live and die.
- **Baha'i World Faith:** Jesus is one of many manifestations of God. Each manifestation supercedes the previous, giving new teaching about God. Jesus, who superceded Moses, was superceded by Muhammad, and most recently by the greatest, Baha'u'llah ("Glory of Allah"). Jesus is not God and did not rise from the dead. He is not the only way to God. Jesus has returned to earth in the form of Baha'u'llah.

2. The Bible teaches that there is only _____ God.

- Deuteronomy 6:4 (Shema) *"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one!"* (This is the creed of Judaism. **The Lord** is a translation of the Hebrew "**Yahweh**", but later the Jews substituted the word "**Adonai**" ("my Lord") since they considered **Yahweh** too sacred to be pronounced. The word **God** here is used in its plural form ("**Elohim**") in the Hebrew text. Thus, "**The Lord our God, the Lord is one!**" could be translated "**Yahweh our Elohim** (plural form), **Yahweh is one!**" This likely emphasizes the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, three Persons of the same substance in the one Godhead. This understanding would not have been apparent to the people of the Old Testament).
- Deuteronomy 32:39 *"There is no God beside Me."*

- Isaiah 43:10 *"Before Me there was no God formed, nor shall there be after Me."*
- Isaiah 44:6 *"Beside Me there is no God."*
- James 2:19 *"You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!"*

3. Although God is one God, He has revealed Himself in the _____.

- The plurality of God can be seen in the very NAME of God (Elohim) The name ELOHIM is found 2,700 times in the Old Testament and is a uni-plural noun that literally means "Gods." It is translated in that manner 239 times (Genesis 3:5; Exodus 22:28, etc.)
- Genesis 1:1 *"In the beginning God"* (Elohim is plural of El—God)
- Genesis 1:26 *"Let US make man in OUR image, according to OUR likeness."* He is not talking to the angels when in Genesis 1:1-3 we see God, the Spirit, and the Light. The word "Elohim" is a uni-plural noun.
- Genesis 3:22 *"Then the Lord God (Elohim) said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of US, to know good and evil.'" Who knows good and evil? God (Elohim)*
- Genesis 3:5 The serpent said to Eve, *"God (Elohim) knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God (Elohim), knowing good and evil."*
- Genesis 11:7 *"Come, let US go down and there confuse their language..."*
- The singular form of the name of God (Eloha) is used twenty five times in the Bible, examples being Deuteronomy 32:15-17 and Habakkuk 3:3. Moses could have very easily used the singular form when talking about God. But he didn't. The plural form is used 2,500 times in the Bible.
- Why is the name plural? Because there are three that bear witness in heaven: The Father, the Word (Jesus the Son), and the Spirit. (1 John 5:7) And these three are one.
- Genesis 19:24 *"And the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah FROM THE LORD out of heaven."* (Two distinct persons here; see Amos 4:10-11)
- Psalm 110:1 *"The Lord said to my Lord, sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool."*
- Proverbs 30:4 *"Who has ascended into heaven, or descended? Who has gathered the wind in His fists? Who has bound the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is His name, and what is HIS SON'S NAME, if you know?"*
- Isaiah 44:6 *"Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, AND his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: I am the First and I am the Last; besides Me there is no God."*
- Isaiah 48:16 *"Come near to Me, hear this: I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, I was there. And now the Lord God and His Spirit have sent Me."*
- Jeremiah 23:5-6 *"Behold, the days are coming says the Lord, that I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; Now this is His name by which He will be called: 'THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.'"*
- Amos 4:10-11 *"I sent among you a plague after the manner of Egypt; your young men I killed with a sword, along with your captive horses; I made the stench of your camps come up into your nostrils; yet you have not returned to Me," says the Lord. I overthrew some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were like a firebrand plucked from the burning; yet you have not returned to Me," says the Lord."*

4. Jesus is not an _____.

- Hebrews 1:4-7 *"having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For to which of the angels did He ever say: 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.' And again: 'I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son.' But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: 'Let the angels of God worship Him.' And of the angels He says: 'Who makes His angels spirits and His ministers a flame of fire.'"*

5. Jesus is more than a _____.

- Hebrews 1:1 *"God who at various times and in various ways spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son..."*

6. Jesus is the _____ of God.

- Hebrews 1:1 *"God who at various times and in various ways spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son..."*
- Luke 3:21-22 *"When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove*

upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, 'You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.'"

- Matthew 16:15-17 "He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter answered and said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Jesus answered and said to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.'"

7. Jesus is _____.

- Hebrews 1:8-9 "But to the Son He says: 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions.'"

8. Jesus is the eternal _____ of God.

- John 1:1, 14 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."
- 1 John 5:7 "There are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit: and these three are one."

9. Jesus is not the _____.

- Mark 14:36 "And He said, 'Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will but what You will.'"
- Luke 2:49 "And He said to them, 'Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?'"
- John 8:16 "And yet if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I AM NOT ALONE, but I am with the Father who sent Me."
- John 8:17-18 "It is also written in your law that the testimony of two men is true. I am One who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me."
- John 14:23 "Jesus answered and said to him, 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and WE will come to him and make OUR home with him.'"

10. Jesus _____ with the Father.

- Proverbs 30:4 "Who has ascended into heaven, or descended? Who has gathered the wind in His fists? Who has bound waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is His name, and what is HIS SON'S NAME, if you know?"
- Isaiah 48:16 "Come near Me, hear this: I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, I was there. And now the Lord God and His Spirit have sent Me."
- Micah 5:2 "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting."
- John 1:1 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God."
- John 8:57-58 "Then the Jews said to Him, 'You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?' Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.'"
- John 17:5 "And, now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with (literally: "alongside") You before the world was."
- Colossians 1:16-17 "For by Him (the Son) all things were created, that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist."

11. Jesus is _____ to the Father.

- John 5:18 "Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God."
- Philippians 2:5-6 "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God."
- John 5:22-23 "For the Father judges no one but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honor the Son as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him."

12. Jesus is not _____ than the Father.

- John 10:29 "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all."

- John 14:28 *"I am going to the Father, for My Father is greater than I."*
- 1 Corinthians 15:27-28 *"But when He says, 'all things are put under Him,' it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who puts all things under Him, that God may be all in all."* (Once His redemptive work is complete, Jesus will continue to remain as Son within the Godhead but no longer function in His assumed saving mediatory role.)

13. Jesus and the Father are _____.

- John 10:30 *"I and My Father are one."*
- John 14:7 *"If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him."*
- John 10:38 *"Though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him."*
- John 14:8-11 *"Philip said to Him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.' Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father?' Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves."*
- John 17:21 *"that they all may be one, as You, Father are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You have sent Me."*

14. _____ is the Biblical term that describes the mystery of the relationship between God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

- Matthew 28:19 *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."*
- Romans 1:20 *"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse."*
- 1 Timothy 3:16 *"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory."*

15. The biblical and historical Christian doctrine of the Godhead is called the _____.

- The Doctrine of the Trinity is based on revelation and a systematic (comprehensive) study of the entire Bible. In Christian theology, the term "trinity" means that there are three eternal distinctions in one divine essence, known respectively as "Father," "Son," and "Holy Spirit" and yet there is only one God. Though the term "trinity" does not appear in the Bible, it is a theological term used early in the history of the church to explain the revelation of the Godhead (other theological words that do not appear in the Bible include "rapture," "oneness," etc. Early Christian teaching about God was preoccupied with the unity of God, but the struggle with paganism and heresy forced the subject to the forefront. The Greek form, *trias*, seems to be used first by Theophilus of Antioch (d. A.D. 181) and its Latin form, *trinitas*, by Tertullian (d. ca. A.D. 220). Tertullian refuted the suggestion that any distinction between the Three involved any division or separation. The distinction was more of a *distribution* rather than a *separation*. He referred to the unity between the root and its shoot, the source and the river, and the sun and its light. His normal way of expressing this distinction was to say that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were one in "substance." This substance has not been divided but *extended*. The Athanasian Creed expresses the doctrine of the trinity thus: "We worship one God in the Trinity, and the Trinity in unity; we distinguish among the persons, but we do not divide the substance...The entire three persons are coeternal and coequal with one another, so that...we worship complete unity in the Trinity and Trinity in unity." The doctrine of the trinity is not a truth of natural theology, but of revelation. A systematic (comparative and organized) study of the Scripture reveals this "Tri-unity" of the Godhead.

16. _____ views of the Trinity include:

- **Tri-theism:** Tri-theism denies the unity of the essence of God and holds to three distinct gods. Historical tri-theism appeared in Monophysite circles around 550 A.D., associated with Johannes Askunages and Johannes Philiponus. The only unity that this view recognizes is a formal unity of conscience in common purpose and endeavor. The three persons are consubstantial.

- **Sabellianism (“Modalism”):** Sabellianism, also called “Modalistic Monarchianism” or “Patripassianism,” was an influential theological movement at the beginning of the third century A.D. It seemed to originate in Asia Minor where Noetus of Smyrna taught this view. His disciple Epigonus brought the teaching to Rome. Then through Praxeas and Sabellius the doctrine gained a strong foothold. Today the belief is commonly called the “Oneness” doctrine and was revived at a 1913 Assembly of God camp meeting outside Los Angeles, CA where an otherwise unknown figure, John G. Scheppe, ran through the camp claiming to have received a revelation concerning the baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. This brought sharp controversy and divisiveness within the Assembly of God that was highlighted in the Fourth General Council in 1916 where the Trinity view of God was upheld and 156 Oneness ministers were barred from membership. From these barred ministers rose modern oneness movements such as the United Pentecostal Church among others. This doctrine holds to a three-fold revelation or “manifestation” of God in the same sense in which a man may be an artist, a teacher, and a friend, or as one may be a father, a son, and a brother. But this is in reality a denial of the trinity, for these are not three *distinctions* in Persons, but are three *qualities* within the same person. While it is true that a person can be a father, son, and brother simultaneously, they can only do so in the context of distinct relationships. A person can be a father but not his own father. A person can be a son but not his own son. A person can be a brother but not his own brother. There must exist a distinction in persons in a relationship between father and son, son and father, and brother and brother. Thus the relationship between the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost cannot exist or be understood without making a distinction in Persons.

17. Jesus is _____ along with the Father.

- John 1:1-3 *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.”*
- Colossians 1:16,17 *“For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.”*
- Hebrews 1:2 *“has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through who also He made the worlds...”*
- Hebrews 1:10 *“You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands.”*

18. Jesus is the only way to the _____.

- John 14:6 *“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’”*

19. The confession and revelation that Jesus blessed concerning Himself was that He is the _____, the _____.

- Matthew 16:16-17 *“Simon Peter answered and said, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.’”*
- If we get Jesus wrong then we get salvation and the church wrong
- Acts 9:5, 20 *“And he (Saul) said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ Then the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting’...Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.”*

20. Because of His obedience, God has highly _____ Jesus and given Him _____ that is above every name.

- Philippians 2:9 *“Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name.”*

21. Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is _____.

- Philippians 2:10-11 *“that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*

22. God has made Jesus both _____ and _____.

- Acts 2:36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

2 John 1:9 "Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds."

23. Believers in the true Jesus are not to _____ anyone who does not abide in the doctrine of Christ.

24. Those who do give them credibility and _____ in their evil deeds.

25. Those who abide in the doctrine of Christ have both the _____ and the _____.

What we believe about Jesus is a serious matter. We are not to fellowship with those who promote another Jesus lest we share in their evil deeds.

JESUS, THE GOD-MAN

The Bible uses different designations to help us understand the nature of the real Jesus. In general, when speaking of His deity the Bible refers to Jesus as "the Word" or "the Son of God". When speaking of His humanity it refers to Him as "Jesus of Nazareth". When speaking of His role as Redeemer it refers to Him as "the Christ." When speaking of His sovereign power and authority it refers to Him as "Lord." When it speaks of the mysterious union of the divine and human nature, it refers to Him as "the Son of Man." Christian theologians accurately refer to Jesus in this mysterious union of deity and humanity as "the God-Man."¹

The Scriptures teach that the real Jesus eternally pre-existed as "the Word" prior to the creation of the heavens and the earth and prior to His Incarnation (coming into this world in human form): "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*"² "The Word" identifies Jesus Christ as Deity. Jesus is the Son of God and the Son of God is the Word.³ The Word pre-existed with God (the Father) and as God. Jesus said, "*I and My Father are One.*"⁴ He eternally existed in the presence of God, in relationship with God, and in fellowship with God.⁵ There was never a time when the Word was not. He did not *become*—He already was. He is "I AM."⁶ He was and is and always will be the Lord from heaven.⁷

The Scriptures teach that the *real* Jesus—as the Word—pre-existed as the Creator. There is absolute distinction between the Word and creation. He was not created—He is the Creator of all things: "*All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.*"⁸ "*He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.*"⁹ "*By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and all of them by the breath of His mouth.*"¹⁰ There is nothing created that does not owe its existence to Him. There is nothing created that does not depend upon Him for its continued existence.¹¹ Although the Word entered into His creation through the Incarnation,¹² He Himself was never created.¹³

The Scriptures teach that the *real* Jesus pre-existed as God and was in the *form* of God.¹⁴ Jesus called men to believe in Him just as they would believe in God.¹⁵ Prior to His Incarnation, Jesus existed in heaven as God. Since God is Spirit, the form of God is Spirit.¹⁶ In the same way, Jesus, as the Word, pre-existed as Spirit.

¹ 1 Timothy 3:16

² John 1:1 NKJV

³ Luke 1:35; John 1:14

⁴ John 10:30 NKJV

⁵ 1 John 1:2-3

⁶ John 8:58

⁷ 1 Corinthians 15:47; Revelation 1:4; 4:11

⁸ John 1:3 NKJV

⁹ John 1:10 NKJV

¹⁰ Psalm 33:6

¹¹ Hebrews 1:3

¹² John 1:14

¹³ Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 1:16, 17; Hebrews 1:2

¹⁴ John 1:1; Philippians 2:6

¹⁵ John 14:1

The Scriptures teach that the *real* Jesus is equal with God.¹⁷ The relationship between God the Father and God the Son is horizontal, not vertical.¹⁸ Although Jesus became subordinate to the Father for the sake of redemption, He remains equal with Him in deity because He is God.¹⁹ The Christian doctrine of the Godhead is called the Trinity that affirms that there is *One God* in three *Persons*—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (*Not three manifestations of one person*)

The Scriptures teach that the *real* Jesus is the Word come to earth as God Incarnate (in human flesh).²⁰ Anyone who claims that Jesus did not come in the flesh is not of God.²¹ How is it possible for the Creator God to take on the form of His creation—even the form of a man? Philippians 2:7-8 explains how it became possible. Jesus, as God, had to make Himself of no reputation. (Literally, “Jesus emptied Himself”) The Incarnation could only take place through a great act of humility. Jesus laid aside His Kingly robe of glory and put on the impoverished garment of human flesh. Jesus did not empty Himself of His deity. Jesus did not exchange His deity for humanity. Although Jesus laid aside the *expression* of His deity, He never for a moment lost *possession* of His deity. Of what, then, did Jesus empty Himself? He emptied Himself of His divine *privileges*: He became a bondservant of God the Father. He emptied Himself of His divine *prerogatives* (He limited His right to know): He grew in wisdom and stature. He emptied Himself of His *riches* in heaven: He became poor that we might be made rich. He emptied Himself of His *shared glory* with the Father in heaven: Jesus prayed that the Father would restore to Him the glory that He shared with Him before the world was made.²² He emptied Himself of His *right to justice* in trial: He could have called twelve legions of angels to rescue him.²³ Jesus even emptied Himself of His *fellowship* (*not relationship*) with the Father on the cross. Jesus cried, “*Father why have You forsaken Me?*”²⁴

In His Incarnation, Jesus took on the form of a bondservant. As a bondservant, Jesus came to do the will of God the Father who sent Him.²⁵ Jesus was the prophetic fulfillment of the Servant-Messiah prophesied by Isaiah.²⁶ Jesus as God possessed a servant’s nature but then took on the position of a servant.²⁷ As God He owned everything but as a servant He lived as if He owned nothing—not a crib, not a bed, not a house, not a boat, not a donkey, and not a tomb. Jesus is our supreme example of servant-hood. He did not come to be served but to serve.²⁸

The Scriptures teach that the *real* Jesus came in the likeness of men. In taking on human flesh He gave visible expression to the will and nature of the invisible God.²⁹ In taking on human flesh, He was able to die as a sacrifice for sins and thus through death destroy the power of the devil. Because Jesus took the form of man, He became the God-Man. As such He became a faithful High Priest between God and man.³⁰ Because of His exaltation and glorification, Jesus has been appointed by God the Father to be the just Judge of all mankind.³¹

The Incarnation of God in human flesh is a mystery.³² In becoming Man, Jesus did not *lose* anything within His deity; rather He *added* humanity to His deity. As the God-Man Jesus Christ is *fully God* and *fully Man*.³³ Jesus as the God-Man is the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Second Person of the Trinity, the eternal Word made flesh. Jesus is not half God and half man. He is fully God and fully Man. Jesus is not a man who had God in Him. Jesus is not merely a man who “manifested the God principle.” One of Jesus’ names is “Immanuel” that means “God with us.”³⁴

¹⁶ John 4:24

¹⁷ Philippians 2:6; John 5:18; 8:58

¹⁸ Hebrews 8:1

¹⁹ John 5:18; Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 1:8

²⁰ John 1:14

²¹ 1 John 4:3

²² John 17:5

²³ Matthew 26:53

²⁴ Matthew 27:46

²⁵ John 4:34

²⁶ Isaiah 52:13-14

²⁷ Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45; Luke 12:37; John 13:2-17; Philippians 2:7

²⁸ Matthew 20:27, 28; Mark 10:45

²⁹ Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:3; John 14:7-9

³⁰ Hebrews 2:14

³¹ John 5:22; Acts 17:31

³² 1 Timothy 3:16

³³ Luke 3:38

³⁴ Matthew 1:23

As the God-Man, Jesus has two distinct natures: divine and human. And yet Jesus is not a double being—one human and one divine. He is not a compound being—part human and part divine. The divine and human natures are not “mixed together” so that they are no longer distinguishable. Rather Jesus’ two natures were joined together through the Incarnation into one new permanent “God-Man” nature in the Person of Jesus Christ. The divine and human natures are easy to distinguish but impossible to divide.³⁵ This oneness of two distinguishable natures in one Person is known as the *Hypostatic Union*.

One of the most common errors among cults is to confuse the two natures of Jesus Christ. Jehovah Witnesses assert Jesus’ humanity but deny His deity. Islam also accepts Jesus’ humanity but denies His deity. Christian Science asserts Jesus’ deity but denies His humanity.

The Scriptures teach that Jesus is the exalted heavenly Man. Jesus did not lay aside His humanity when He rose from the dead.³⁶ Jesus’ physical body was resurrected in a glorified state.³⁷ Paul calls Jesus “the heavenly Man”.³⁸ “Heavenly” speaks of His deity; “Man” speaks of his humanity. Jesus is even now seated at the right hand of God in His glorified human body as the God-Man: “*For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,*”³⁹ As the heavenly Man, Jesus mediates as High Priest between God and men.

Yes, it matters what you and I believe about Jesus.

It matters what we believe about the Incarnation of God into human flesh. Don’t be fooled by those who peddle another Jesus. The Christian faith is built upon the foundation of the *real* Jesus. The real Jesus is the foundation of our faith, of the church, of our fellowship, and of our worship. If we get the Jesus of the Bible wrong, then we get salvation and the church wrong. If we get the Person of Jesus and His Work on the Cross wrong, it matters not what else we get right.

³⁵ In His divine nature Jesus could not be tempted but in his human nature He was tempted in every way as we are. As God He came to do the Father’s will but as man He prayed for “Not my will but thy will be done.” (James 1:13; Matthew 4:1; Hebrews 4:15; Luke 22:42)

³⁶ Luke 24:39

³⁷ Philippians 3:21

³⁸ 1 Corinthians 15:48-49

³⁹ 1 Timothy 2:15

EARLY CHRISTIAN CREEDS (Defining the Christian Faith)

Note: The term "catholic" means "universal" and was used prior to the formation of the Roman Catholic Church

1. THE APOSTLE'S CREED:

"I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary; Suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; The third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit. He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit. I believe a holy catholic Church, the communion of saints; The forgiveness of sins; The resurrection of the body; And the life everlasting. Amen."

2. THE NICENE CREED:

"I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made. Who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the living and the dead, whose kingdom shall have no end. And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life; who proceedeth from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spake by the prophets. And I believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen."

3. THE ATHANASIAN CREED:

"Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholic faith; Which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. And the catholic faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; Neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance. For there is one person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Spirit. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit is all one, the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Spirit. The Father uncreate, the Son uncreate, and the Holy Spirit uncreate. The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, the Holy Spirit incomprehensible. The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Spirit eternal. And yet they are not three eternals, but one uncreated and one incomprehensible. So likewise the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, and the Holy Spirit almighty; And yet they are not three almighties, but one almighty. So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God; And yet they are not three Gods, but one God. So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Spirit Lord; ...So are we forbidden by the catholic religion to say: There are three Gods or three Lords. The Father is made of none, neither created nor begotten...The Holy Spirit is of the Father and of the Son; neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding. So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Spirit, not three Holy Spirits. And in this Trinity none is afore, or after another; none is greater, or less than another. But the whole three persons are co-eternal, and co-equal. So that in all things, as aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped. He therefore that will be saved must thus think of the Trinity. Furthermore is it necessary to everlasting salvation that he also believe rightly the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the right faith is that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and man. God of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and man of the substance of His mother, born in the world. Perfect God and perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting. Equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching His manhood. Who, although He is God and man, yet He is not two, but one Christ. One, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the manhood into God, One altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ; Who suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead; He ascended into heaven, He sitteth on the right hand of the Father, God Almighty; From thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies; And shall give account of their own works. And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting, and they that have done evil into everlasting fire. This is the catholic faith, which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved."