

Lesson 4 Christ – Part 1: His Claims, & His Character

The distinctively Christian claim about God: He has spoken and acted fully and finally in Jesus Christ

- I. Who is Jesus Christ?
 - A. A historical person
 - B. Possessing two distinct and perfect natures – one divine, and one human
 - C. Absolutely and forever unique

- II. What is the evidence?
 - A. His claims
 - B. His character

- III. Jesus Claims
 - A. His Self-Centered Teaching
 1. He spoke of the fatherhood and kingdom of God, and of himself as the Father's "Son".
*("Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of **my Father** who is in heaven. Matt. 7:21)*
 2. He called the kingdom of God "my kingdom".
*("You are those who have stayed with me in my trials, and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in **my kingdom** and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Luke 22:28-30)*
 3. He was self-advancing (not self-effacing) – "I am the truth; follow me."
 - a. *(Jesus said to them, "**I am the bread of life**; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. John 6:35)*
 - b. *(Again, Jesus spoke to them, saying, "**I am the light of the world**. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 8:12)*
 - c. *(Jesus said to her, "**I am the resurrection and the life**. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" John 11:25-26)*
 - d. *(Jesus said to him, "**I am the way, and the truth, and the life**. No one comes to the Father except through me. John 14:6)*
 - e. *(**Come to me**, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Matt. 11:28-29)*
 4. His teaching led to the question, "Who do you say that I am?" (Mark 8:29)
 - a. *(Your father **Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day**. He saw it and was glad." John 8:56)*
 - b. *(For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for **he wrote of me**. John 5:46)*
 - c. *(You search **the Scriptures** because you think that in them you have eternal life; and **it is they that bear witness about me**,...John 5:39)*
 - d. *(And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in **all the Scriptures the things concerning himself**. Luke 24:27)*

5. When Jesus visits the synagogue he reads Isaiah 61:1-2. *(And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,*
“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”
And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them,
“Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” Luke 4:17-21)
6. Jesus urged people to believe in himself. *“The work of God is this: to **believe in the one he has sent.**”* (John 6:29) *“For this is the will of my Father, that **everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life,** and I will raise him up on the last day.”* (John 6:40)

B. His Direct Claims

1. His first recorded words in public were about the fulfillment of ancient promises. *“The **time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand;** repent and believe in the gospel.”* (Mark 1:15)
2. He assumed the title “Son of Man”, a Messianic title from the prophet Daniel. *(“I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a **son of man** and he came to the **Ancient of Days** and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed. Dan. 7:13-14)*

*(But that you may know that the **Son of Man** has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he said to the man who was paralyzed—“**I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home.**” Luke 5:24)*
3. He accepted the description “**Son of God**”, another **Messianic title** from Psalm 2:7. *(He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, “**I am the Son of God.**”* Matt. 27:43). This was spoken by those who passed by him while he hung on the cross.
4. Simon Peter declared his faith in Jesus as the **Christ** *(And he asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “**You are the Christ.**”* Mark 8:29)

Jesus acknowledged himself to be the Christ *(But he remained silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, “**Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?**” And Jesus said, “**I am,** and you will see the **Son of Man** seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.”* Mark 14:61-62). The title “Christ” refers to “the anointed one”, “the chosen one”, “the Messiah”.

5. An even greater claim than "Messiah" was Jesus' claim to deity. *"I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). "I am in the Father and the Father is in me (John 14:11).* It is true that Jesus taught his disciples to address God as "Father", but to him God is uniquely "my Father". Note what he says to Mary Magdalene after his resurrection, *"I am ascending to my Father and your Father."* (John 20:17)

6. Jesus equates the attitude people had toward him with the attitude they had toward God. In short:
 - a. to know him is to know God (*They said to him therefore, "Where is your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither me nor my Father. **If you knew me, you would know my Father also.**"* John 8:19)

 - b. to see him is to see God (*And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. John 12:45)*
 (*Jesus said to him, "have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? **Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.** How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"* John 14:9)

 - c. to believe in him is to believe in God (*And Jesus cried out and said, "Whoever **believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me.**"* John 12:44)

 - d. to receive him is to receive God (*"Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever **receives me, receives not me but him who sent me.**"* Mark 9:37)

 - e. to hate him is to hate God (*Whoever **hates me hates my Father also.*** John 15:23)

 - f. to honor him is to honor God (*For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may **honor the Son, just as they honor the Father.*** John 5:22-23)

 - g. Two of Jesus' most far reaching claims:
 - i. When asked by the Jewish leaders, "Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died?...Who do you make yourself out to be?", Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **before Abraham was, I am.**" In this Jesus was claiming to have eternally existed before Abraham, and to take upon himself the divine title reserved for God alone.

 - ii. After Jesus' resurrection, when He invites Thomas to touch his wounds, and Thomas cries out, "**My Lord and my God!**", Jesus accepted this description of himself, that is, he accepted Thomas' worship which is to be given to God alone.

C. His Indirect Claims – He did the things that only God should do

7. He claimed to forgive sins

a. When four men lowered a paralytic man before him while he was preaching, Jesus saw their faith and said to the paralytic, “*Son, your sins are forgiven.*” The scribes accused him of blaspheming because only God can forgive sins. (*Mark 2:1-12*)

b. On another occasion, a woman who had been known to have been living an immoral life came up to Jesus while he was reclining at a table, washed his feet with her tears, wiped them with her hair, kissed them, and poured perfume on them. And Jesus said to her, “*Your sins are forgiven.*” (*Luke 7:36-50*)

8. He claimed to give life

He described himself as “the bread of life” (*John 6:35*), “the life” (*John 14:6*), “the resurrection and the life” (*John 11:25*). He called himself the Good Shepherd who would not only give his life for the sheep, but give life to them (*John 10:11, 17:2, 5:21*).

9. He claimed to teach the truth

He spoke with authority all his own (*Matt. 7:28-29*). Though he often quoted the Old Testament, he didn’t need to. His pattern was not, “This is what God says,” but “This is what I say.” He predicted the future with complete conviction, he issued absolute moral commands like “Love your enemies”, “Do not worry about your life”, “Do not judge, or you too will be judged”. He made promises with absolute conviction of their fulfillment: “Ask and it will be given to you.”

10. He claimed to judge the world

He will wake up the dead, the whole world will be gathered before him, and judgement will be entrusted to him by the Father. (*John 5:22, 28, 29; Matt. 25:31-46*) Indeed, to be excluded from heaven on the last day, Jesus will quite simply say to them, “I never knew you.” (*Matt. 7:21-23*)

D. His Dramatized Claims – His miracles often revealed his claims about himself. For example:

1. His feeding of the five thousand illustrated his claim to satisfy the hunger of the human heart. “I am the bread of life”. (*John 6:35*)

2. His opening the eyes of a man born blind, when he’d stated earlier, “I am the light of the world.” He opens the spiritual eyes of those who are blind to see and know God. (*John 8:12*)

3. He raised Lazarus from the dead and claimed, “I am the resurrection and the life”. (*John 11:25*)

IV. The Character of Christ

- A. Jesus really does appear to be who he said he was. There is consistency between his words and his deeds.
- B. His claims were exclusive, and his character was unique. "Talk about Alexander the Great and Charles the Great and Napoleon the Great if you will...Jesus is apart. He is not the Great; he is the Only." Carnegie Simpson, *The Fact of Christ*.
- C. Jesus is not like any other man, for He is sinless. *And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone." Mark 10:18* That's it exactly. Jesus is good...good with the absolute goodness of God. John Stott, *Basic Christianity*

"This separateness from sinners is not a little, but a stupendous thing; it is the presupposition of redemption; it is that very virtue in Christ without which he could not be qualified to be a Savior, but would, like us need to be saved." Tennyson, quoted by Carnegie Simpson.

- D. What Christ thought of himself.
When a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery was brought before Jesus and told by the Pharisees that the Law commands that she be stoned, and Jesus was asked, "So what do you say?", he responded "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her." One by one her accusers went away until Jesus alone was left. Later on in John 8, Jesus asks his accusers, "Which one of you convicts me of sin?" But, none could answer.
- E. What Christ's friends thought of him.
 1. Peter describes Jesus as "a lamb without blemish or defect", and as one who "committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." (I Pet. 1:19; 2:22)
 2. John, who in his epistle says that every human being is a sinner, and that if we say we have no sin or have not sinned, we are liars and make God out to be a liar. And yet, John says that in Christ, who came to take away our sins, there "is no sin." (I John 1:8-10; 3:5)
 3. Paul and the writer of Hebrews say that Jesus "had not sin," but rather was "holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners." And, He was "tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin." (II Cor. 5:21; Heb. 7:26; 4:15)
- F. What Christ's enemies said of him.
 1. He was accused of blasphemy because he had forgiven a man's sin. This would have been blasphemy only if Jesus were not divine, but He openly claimed to be divine which he also demonstrated by his miracles and his resurrection. His enemy's claims of blasphemy are, therefore, unfounded.
 2. He was accused of evil associations. Jesus did spend time with sinners. In fact he had earned the honored title "friend of sinners", though he remained "separated from sinners".

3. He was accused of frivolous religion.

The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds. (Matt. 11:19) Though Jesus was full of joy, it is absolutely certain that he took religion seriously.

4. He was accused of Sabbath-breaking. Though Jesus rejected human traditions regarding the Sabbath, He fully submitted to and obeyed God's law regarding the Sabbath.

5. The testimony of Jesus' enemies.

- a. *So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "**I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves.**" (Matt. 27:24)*
- b. *Pilate then called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was misleading the people. And after examining him before you, behold, **I did not find this man guilty of any of your charges against him. Neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us. Look, nothing deserving death has been done by him** (Luke 23:13-15)*
- c. *Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, saying, "I have sinned by **betraying innocent blood.**" They said, "What is that to us? See to it yourself." Matt. 27:3-4*
- d. *And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but **this man has done nothing wrong.**" Luke 23:41*
- e. *When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, "**Truly this was the Son of God!**" Matt. 27:54*