

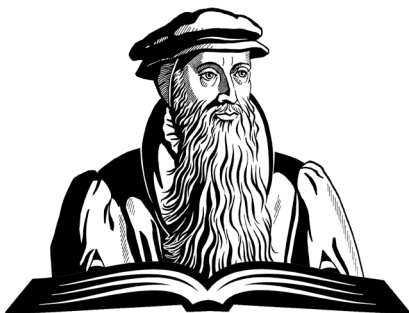
# SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

## Video Lecture Series

Lectures 1 to 3, by Dr. Stephen Myers  
and  
Lectures 4 to 10, by Robert D. McCurley, ThM

*Module 4*

## CHRISTOLOGY— THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST 10 Lectures



The John Knox Institute  
of Higher Education

## **John Knox Institute of Higher Education**

*Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide*

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# SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

by Dr. Stephen Myers and Robert D. McCurley, ThM

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# SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

by Dr. Stephen Myers

*Module 4 ~ Lecture 1*

## Introduction to Christology

We want to begin now our study of Christology, where we learn both who Jesus Christ is, and what he's done for his people. In the Gospel of Matthew, in Matthew 16, Jesus has an important conversation with his disciples. They're in the town of Caesarea Philippi, a town outside of Israel, and Jesus begins in Matthew, chapter 16, verse 13, with a very simple question for his disciples: "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" Jesus wants his disciples to tell him what other people are saying about his identity, about who he is. The disciples tell Jesus, in verse 14, that some people say that he is John the Baptist. Some people say that he is Elijah. Other people say that he is Jeremiah. Still other people say that he is simply one of the prophets.

Now all of these identities are very important identities. All of these are people whom the Old Testament had said would come before the coming of the Messiah. These are important identities. To have been any of these figures, would have been to be a very important person. None of these are lowly assessments of who Jesus is. But they're all wrong. All the people on whom the disciples are reporting have said exalted things about Jesus. None of them has sought to insult Jesus, or underestimate his importance or his glory, but they've all been wrong. So Jesus turns his attention to the disciples themselves. In verse 15, Jesus looks upon his disciples, and he says, "But whom say ye that I am?" But in hearing this question, the disciples—they are men who have left behind everything to follow Jesus: they've left their homes, their jobs, their families, they've laid down everything to follow Jesus, to be with him. So who is he? Who is this man who is positioned at the very center of their lives?

Peter speaks up and speaks into the charged silence, and he says, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And with those words, Peter speaks the truth that stands at the very center of history. Peter tells us who Jesus is. He is the Christ, the promised One of God. And in that identity, Jesus tells us what Jesus has come to do—he's come to bring the deliverance that had been foretold from the very beginning of the book of Genesis. In one sentence, one answer, to one question, Peter has given us a Christology that it will take us the rest of this lecture series to unpack. You see, it matters who Jesus is. It matters deeply who Jesus is. Doubtless there are many things on your heart and on your mind right now. There are distractions, and cares, and concerns. There are things going on in your life, in your family, and they're all terribly important—they are. But none of them is as important as your answer to this simple question: Whom do you say that Jesus is? You can say a lot about him. You can say high and lofty things about him, and still miss him in his glory. All of the people whose responses the disciples reported had—those people had encountered Jesus, but they didn't know who he was. Whom do you say that Jesus is? That's more important than anything else.

Let's start with an easy answer, with an obvious answer. Who is Jesus? Well, he's Jesus. In Matthew, chapter 1, verse 21, Joseph just has learned that Mary, whom he is supposed to marry, is pregnant, and so he has decided to end their relationship quietly. However, an angel of the Lord appears to Joseph in a dream, and tells him that the child in Mary's womb is conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost. And then the angel goes on to say, "And she shalt bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name, JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins." This holy One is named Jesus, because he will save his people from their sin. His name "Jesus" means, literally, "Jah saves," or "Jehovah saves." Now if you likely already know, Jehovah is the most precious name of God given in the Old Testament. It's his covenant name, his most precious name—the name that most clearly points him out as the God who faithfully, and all-powerfully saves his people. And "Jesus" means "Jehovah saves"—or even "Jehovah is salvation". His name, Jesus, is conjuring up all of God's saving acts in past generations, all of his deliverances of his people, and placing the baby in Bethlehem as the ultimate fulfillment of that salvation. Jehovah is the God who delivered his people out of Egyptian shackles. Jehovah is the God who brought the children of Israel into a land flowing with milk and honey. Jehovah saves. All of history, all the Old Testament, all of it is testimony of the same truth that Jesus' name holds forth—God saves, Jehovah saves.

But notice the subtle shift in what the angel says. Jesus is given this name "Jesus", which means "Jehovah saves"—why? Because Jehovah saves? Well yes, but that's not what the passage says. Verse 21 says that this child is to be named "Jehovah saves," because he will save his people. When we see Jesus saving his people, we see Jehovah saving his people—we see God himself saving his people. Jesus just is the saving God of the covenant. Jesus isn't named "Jesus" because Jehovah is going to save his people through him. No, the passage tells us that Mary's son will be named Jesus, because, as Jehovah, he will save his people. Jehovah saves—Jesus saves—it's saying the same thing.

And notice what Jesus is saving. Verse 21 says that Jesus will save his people. When Mary's son undertakes and accomplishes his work of redemption, he won't be saving God's people, he won't be saving Jehovah's people. No, Scripture tells us that he will be saving "his" people. To speak of God's people, and to speak of Jesus' people, is to speak of the same group. In Mary's son, the God of Israel has come for his people.

And from what will this saving Jesus save his covenant people? He'll save them from their sin. He hasn't come to save them from political oppression. He hasn't come to save them from hardship or affliction. No, according to verse 21, he's come to save them from their sin. Many centuries earlier, the psalmist had written, in Psalm 130, verses 7 and 8: "Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption. And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities." The son of Mary is that One—the Jehovah of Israel, who has perforated time to redeem his people from their iniquities, just as he had promised.

Do you see the glory of this Jesus? The Lord of glory, whose throne is in heaven, and whose footstool is the earth, he names himself by his Majesty. He is the Jehovah who saves—the Almighty God who saves. And he also names himself by our need. He's the One who saves. He names himself by the mission of salvation that he has undertaken to bring us to himself. The incandescent glory of the thrice holy God, and the crushing need of his people—they meet in Jesus. They kiss in his name—his majestic glory and our debilitating need.

Who do we say that Jesus is? We say that he is Jesus, the Holy One of Israel, who has come for his people to save them from their sin. And this Jesus, he is the Christ. That is specifically the name that Peter uses for Jesus in Matthew 16, verse 16: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."



And this word, this title “Christ” means “the Anointed One”. Now here is one of the many places where it’s important to remember that the Old Testament originally was written in the Hebrew language, while the New Testament originally was written in the Greek language. The two parts of the Bible originally were written in different languages. And so sometimes, the same word will look different, will be different in the New Testament than it was in the Old Testament. And that’s precisely what happens here. In the New Testament, the title “Christ” is used to mean the exact same thing that was meant by the title “Messiah” in the Old Testament. When Peter says that Jesus is the Christ, he is confessing that Jesus is the Messiah. And the Messiah, in the Old Testament, was the longed-for deliverer whom God had promised that he would send for the salvation of his people. By the time of Jesus’ earthly ministry—and that phrase “Jesus’ earthly ministry” refers to the whole span of time between Jesus’ birth, and his crucifixion.” But we’ll talk more about that later. By the time of Jesus’ earthly ministry, the Jewish expectations for the Messiah had become attached specifically to the promises surrounding a Davidic king. In 2 Samuel, chapter 7, God had made a covenant with David, and among other things, God had promised that one of David’s descendants would rule over Israel forever. That promise had become Israel’s great hope. There was a king, a son of David, whom God would send to rule over them. In Psalm 2, the psalmist had said that the nations, the wicked leaders of the world, were arrayed against God, and against his Messiah—in verse 2. And then in verses 8 and 9, God had declared that all of those nations would be given to his Messiah. His Messiah would shatter his enemies before him. The Messiah, who would reign over God’s people in accordance with God’s promise, he would destroy all of the enemies of his name and of his people. This promise, and many others like it—the promise of a coming Messiah—was very dear to the Israelite people, as they suffered in the hands of others, in the hands of pagan nations; as they were carried into captivity in Babylon; as they were ruled by the Roman Empire. It was these promises of a Messiah to which they clung, and in which they hoped.

One place where the Old Testament speaks of this Messiah, and of his deliverance, is in Habakkuk, chapter 3. There, the prophet Habakkuk is praying, and he describes this scene of coming deliverance; this raw, harrowing description of the Lord coming in judgment against the nations and in deliverance for his people. And in Habakkuk, chapter 3, verse 3 through 5, we read this: “God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. And his brightness was as the light; he had horns coming out of his hand: and there was the hiding of his power. Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet. He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting.” This is a deliverer. This is One who lays the mountains down, in order to gather in his people, and in order to deliver them. And then we read, skipping down to verse 13: “Thou wentest forth for the salvation thy people, even for salvation with thine anointed; thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked, by discovering the foundation unto the neck. Selah.” This mighty, trembling deliverance that God is going to bring to his people, Habakkuk says, he will bring through his Messiah, with his Messiah. This is the Anointed One. This is the Messiah. And he brings the deliverance of the God whose feet spew burning coals. There is hope. There is deliverance. There is power here for the people of God.

This judging, all-powerful Messiah appears elsewhere in the Old Testament, of course. In Isaiah, chapter 11, verse 1 and following, we read this: “And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: and the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of

knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.” Now here, the promised One of God, the Messiah, the Anointed One, he isn’t anointed in any ordinary way. He’s anointed with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of the Lord rests upon him. And as you see towards the end of the passage that we read, this Messiah will be precisely what we read described in Habakkuk 3. He’ll smite the enemies of his people, he’ll slay the wicked. But before we get there, before we get to the judgment, we see something more. Not only will the Anointed One deliver his people by destroying their enemies, but also by ruling among them in peace, and in wisdom, and in equity. This Messiah, he is marked by wisdom, and by love for the Lord. The poor, the meek, the vulnerable, they’re not intimidated by him—he is for them. This Anointed One, he delivers the children of Israel, he destroys their enemies, and with him, his people are safe. They are people set free, and ruled in righteousness, delivered from oppression, and ruled in peace.

Now if you noticed, at the very start of our passage, we were told that this Messiah is of the stem of Jesse. Now Jesse, of course, was the father of David. This is a Davidic Messiah, a Messiah in the line of David who is described here. And we find this Davidic Messiah once again in Micah, chapter 5, at verse 2. And there, through his servant, Micah, the Lord declares: “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from old, from everlasting.” In Bethlehem, there would be born the One who would rule in Israel—the great son of David. Descending from David, this One would come and rule over God’s people.

Now here, it’s important to note what we find in Matthew, chapter 2, at verse 2. There, three wise men from the east, far away from Israel, men who aren’t Jews. They’ve seen a star in the sky. They’ve known that this star means that the king of the Jews has been born, and they have travelled for a long, long time to find, by that star, the newborn king. Now here, they have arrived in Jerusalem, they ask King Herod where the king of the Jews has been born, where the Davidic king, the promised Messiah, in other words, has been born. And Herod goes to his chief priests and his scribes, he goes to his religious leaders, and according to Matthew, chapter 2, verse 4, he demanded of them where the Christ should be born. Continuing into verse 5: “And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.” In this one panicked scene, you see the coalescing—the coming together—of all of these components of Messianic expectation. You have the promised descendant of David, the king of the Jews to whom the wise men refer in verse 2, when Herod hears mention of this Davidic descendant, and he speaks of that Davidic figure to his scribes and priests, what does he call it?—the Christ, Messiah. And instantly, the scribes and the priests know where this One has been born. They’ve read their Bibles, you could say—they know that he is to be born in Bethlehem. They quote Micah, chapter 5, verse 2 to that effect. So, the descendant of David, the Messiah, the One through whom God would rule over and care for his people, it all is the same person. They all speak of the same One—the Messiah, the Christ, is the promised One through whom God would deliver his people from every oppression, and through whom, he would rule in righteousness in their midst.

And then, in Caesarea Philippi, outside of Israel’s bounds, Peter says to Jesus, “Thou art the

Christ.” Now, we don’t know this for certain—none of us were there. But you can imagine, Peter’s words must have hung in the air—silenced everything else: “Thou art the Christ.” Generation upon generation of God’s people, all had been waiting for this promised deliverer, and then he came, and he was standing before Peter—Jesus, the Christ. First Peter, chapter 1, verse 12 tells us that these things are so wonderful that the very angels of heaven long to look upon. Jesus is the Christ.

Always, there is the question: Whom do you say that Jesus is? We’ve started to see something of the answer. We will spend the rest of our time together seeking to see that answered more fully—the answer to that question that ought to punctuate all of our days, and that will be before us even on the last great day. And in what we’ve seen so far, we’ve seen at least three things.

First, when we seek to understand who Jesus is, we are not dealing only with New Testament realities. All of the Old Testament speaks of Jesus. Through it, God was preparing his people, so that, at the perfect moment, when Jesus, the Messiah, came, they would be prepared for it. In Genesis, chapter 3, verse 15, God promised that at the perfect time, he would send One who would crush the head of Satan, One who would destroy the enemy of the souls of his people. In that promise, God promised Jesus. And all of the rest of the Old Testament unfolds the riches of that promised Messiah. In Luke, chapter 24, and verse 27, the Scriptures tell us that all of the Old Testament is about Jesus. It prepares the way for him, it points to him, it traces out who he will be in the hearts of his people. And as we work our way through the study of Christ, we will deal often with the Old Testament, because Jesus is there, and it speaks of him.

You are here, and you’re listening to these lectures, because you want to know truth, and that’s wonderful—it’s commendable. In wanting to know truth, you are desiring a good thing. But at the very center of Biblical religion, there is not an abstract truth, there’s a person—there’s Jesus. If we could but see him and know him, we will have all other things besides. Jesus is at the center of God’s revelation to man. Jesus is at the center of the Bible. And so, we will draw on all of God’s Word as we consider Christ.

Now the second thing that we’ve seen is that when we deal with Christ, we are dealing with an infinitely glorious person. We’re told, in Isaiah, chapter 53, at verse 2, that there was nothing visibly different about Jesus. When he was born, he looked like any other child. You could walk past him on the dusty streets of Galilee, and he would appear like any other person. In fact, in places like John 6, verse 42; Matthew, chapter 13, verse 55 and 56, people who knew Jesus personally, had difficulty believing that he was any different from any other person from their home towns. But Jesus was the glorious, living God, come in the flesh. In Isaiah, chapter 6, verses 1 through 4, the prophet Isaiah has a vision. And he sees the Lord sitting upon his throne. We’re told that the Lord is high and lifted up. His glory fills the heavenly temple. His glory is so overwhelming that the very pillars of the heavenly temple quake—they nearly collapse under the weight of his glory. And he’s encircled by angels—angels with six wings. With two wings, the angels cover their feet; with two wings, they fly; and with two wings, they cover their eyes—they cover their eyes. They cover their eyes, because the holiness of this God is so pure, is so clean, that they cannot even look upon it—he’s too holy. And one of the angels, he cries out: “Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.” And Isaiah, the prophet who’s seeing this, he falls back. He sees his unworthiness. He fears that he will be consumed. This is the God of glory—the God of a glory so immense that even the heaven of heavens cannot contain it, and the angels cannot behold it. And in John 12, verses 40 and 41, John tells us that this Holy One, this One of such overwhelming glory, was Jesus before he came in the flesh.

Brothers and sisters, as we learn about Jesus, as we draw near to Jesus, we’re not dealing with



just another religious leader. We're not dealing with one who fits neatly into our categories and understandings. We're dealing with the living God of heaven and earth. We're dealing with One too holy for the angels to behold. We're dealing with One before whom one day, all of the rulers of the world will bow. When we draw into his presence, we draw into the fire of the holiness of God. This is the One, this is the One in whom we have all things. This is the One without whom we have nothing. Brothers and sisters, I want you to know truth. I want you to know doctrine. But I want most for you to know Jesus, because he's everything. He's everything. He is the radiant glory of the living God.

But third, because of who he is, Jesus has undertaken a very specific work. There are things that he came to do. There are things that he even still now is doing. He redeems his people. He saves them from their sin. He rules over this people in peace. He judges the wicked. Because he is Jesus the Christ, he has a majestic work that he has undertaken. Because he is Jesus the Christ, that work will come to certain complete perfection in his time.

Now all of this will be our concern in the coming lectures, as we undertake the study of Christology. Who is Jesus? And what has he done? And what is he doing? Brothers and sisters, these are not trivial questions. These questions have, as their answer, the gospel. So let us set out to answer them. Together, we will do that—we will seek to answer these questions. But I invite you, I challenge you, the whole time to be asking a question that no one else can answer, that I certainly can't answer: Who do you say that Jesus is? If you will but see him in what lies ahead, not seeing just facts, not seeing just Scripture references, but seeing him, you will cry out with Thomas, in John 20, verse 28: "My Lord, and my God!" And you will know life, and you will be able to minister that life to others. May it be so.

# SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

by Dr. Stephen Myers

## *Module 4 ~ Lecture 2*

### **The Divinity of Christ**

In Matthew, chapter 16, verse 13, Jesus asks his disciples a question: “Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?” As we discussed in our last time together, this is the most important question in all the world. This question, and our answer to the question, stands at the very center of Christianity. Whom do we say that Jesus is? And the Scriptures give us profound, life-changing answers to that question. Among other things, in the Scriptures, we find out that Jesus both fully and completely God, and he is fully and completely man. Over the next three lectures, we’re going to spend time examining this scriptural witness.

First, how do the Scriptures show us that Jesus is fully God? This is referred to as the divinity of Christ. Next, how do the Scriptures show us that Jesus is fully man? This is referred to as the humanity of Christ. And then, how can we understand how Jesus is both fully God and fully man at the same time? These are important issues. These are issues that give us a glimpse of the glory and the beauty of Jesus Christ. In our time together in this session, we’ll look first, at five ways in which the Scriptures present Jesus as being fully God, and then we’ll spend a little bit of time in four different passages of Scripture, where we see with particular clarity that Jesus is fully and truly God.

But first, what are five ways in which the Scripture presents Jesus as being fully God. Well first, the Scripture repeatedly uses divine names for Jesus. Last time, we saw how the Scripture gives the name Jehovah to Jesus. In fact, that’s at the very center of his name—Jesus. If you’ll remember, in Matthew 1, verse 21, the angel tells Joseph that Jesus’s name is to be JESUS, which means Jehovah saves, because he, Jesus, will save his people from their sin. Jesus is the Jehovah who saves. Well, in Isaiah, chapter 42, verse 8, God says he will give this name, Jehovah, to none other than himself. In being Jehovah, Jesus is God. In fact, the Scriptures call Jesus exactly that. In John, chapter 20, verse 28, which we also mentioned last time, Thomas had cried out to Jesus, “My Lord, and my God.” Similarly, in Romans, chapter 9, verse 5, Paul refers to Christ as “God blessed for ever.” In Titus, chapter 2, verse 13, Paul speaks of “the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” In a variety of ways, and in a variety of settings, the Scriptures freely use divine names—names intended only for God—to refer to Jesus.

In addition to having divine names used of him, Jesus also, secondly, displays divine attributes. In John, chapter 8, verse 58, Jesus says, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.” Now here, Jesus tells us that he existed before Abraham. Jesus’s point is that he was before he became flesh. Jesus is eternal. In Hebrews, chapter 13, and verse 8, we read of “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” We read a very similar description of Jesus, alongside a self-description by Jesus himself, in Revelation, chapter 1, verse 8. There, Jesus says, “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which

is to come, the Almighty.” Jesus Christ hasn’t only always been, he’s not only eternal, he also is unchanging, or immutable—qualities, or characteristics, or attributes that are true only of God, are said by the Scripture to be true of Jesus. What does that mean? It means that Jesus is fully God.

But not only is Jesus given divine names, and not only does he display divine attributes, but Jesus also manifests divine power. In John, chapter 6, after Jesus had fed five thousand men with just five loaves of bread and two fish, his disciples boarded a boat to cross the sea of Galilee to Capernaum. Jesus himself stayed ashore. But then in the night, the disciples saw something unexpected. Beginning in John, chapter 6, and verse 19, we read this: “They see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship: and they were afraid. But he saith unto them, It is I; be not afraid. Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.” Now there are a lot of very important details in those three verses.

First, as Jesus drew near to the ship, as he drew near to the terrified disciples, what did he say? In verse 20, Jesus said, “It is I.” It’s not always easy to recognize this, as the Scriptures get translated out of their original languages and into different languages, but Jesus there identifies himself by using the most precious name for God in the Old Testament. We’ve seen this name before, we mentioned it just a moment ago. In Exodus, chapter 3, and verse 14, Moses is standing at the burning bush, and God is speak to him out of the burning bush, and God declares for Moses what was his most precious, most personal name—Jehovah. Or sometimes, some people pronounce it as Yahweh. But what it means is, “I am,” or even, “I am that I am.” Who is God? He is the one who simply is. God is the one who cannot not exist. He just is. God’s name is “I am.” And what does Jesus say to his trembling disciples, in John, chapter 6, verse 20? “It is I,” or to translate the passage very directly, what Jesus actually says is, “I am.” He identifies himself as the holy, living God of Israel.

But that identification doesn’t just stop with Jesus’s words. Notice what Jesus is doing in the passage. He’s walking on the waves of the sea. The stormy waves are his path. And when he reaches the boat in calmness, the disciples find themselves at the place they wanted to be. In the Old Testament book of Job, we find many glorious descriptions of God’s power and his majesty, and among those descriptions, we find in Job, chapter 9, verse 8, these words. Job is speaking of who God is at this point, and he says, in Job, chapter 9, verse 8, that God “alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea.” Who treads on the waves of the sea? God does. And here comes Jesus, strolling on the sea. Or consider Psalm 107. Beginning in verse 21, Psalm 107 speaks of God’s power as displayed in his control over the seas, how he shows his power through his works there, how he commands the wind, and the rising and the falling of the waves, how he is in sovereign control over those who do their business on the sea. Let’s read there beginning in verse 23: “They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the LORD, and his wonders in the deep. For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits’ end. Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven.” According to those verses in Psalm 107, what does God do? He controls the seas. And so when his people in distress cry out to him, he delivers them, he calms the waves, and he brings them into their desired haven. And amidst the panicked cries of his disciples, Jesus has come to them, and he’s delivered them, and they find themselves in their desired haven.

As we've seen already, there are many places in Scripture where Jesus is called God, or he is given divine names, he is called what God is called. But Jesus's divinity as seen in Scripture, is so much richer than just that. All of the things that God alone does, all of the things for which his people had praised him in the Old Testament, all of the mighty things that God and God alone can do, Jesus does them. And he does them in precisely the same way as the Old Testament had described God doing it. This one, this one who makes the stormy waves his path, and who delivers his people to peace, he is God. That's what the Old Testament says, and that's what Jesus demonstrates.

But Jesus doesn't demonstrate this only through his display of raw power. Jesus also, in a closely related way, manifests his divinity through his exercise of divine prerogatives. Not only does Jesus do the things that only God can do, but underlying that, Jesus has the authority that only God has. We read a striking example of this in Matthew, chapter 9, verses 1 through 8. Here, Matthew is referring to Jesus, and he writes, "And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city. And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee. And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth. And Jesus, knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house, and he arose, and departed to his house. But when the multitudes saw it, they marveled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men."

Now here, Jesus has crossed over the sea of Galilee, he's come to his home town, and he has this dramatic interaction. There's a man with palsy, a man with a debilitating physical affliction, and some of his friends, or some of his family—the passage doesn't say exactly—but some people who care about this man, they bring him to Jesus. This man is unable even to walk. Those who bring him, have to carry him on a bed to Jesus for healing. Jesus sees this man, and verse 2 tells us that Jesus is moved. He sees the faith of the man and his friends. And so what does Jesus do? He doesn't immediately heal the man. No, Jesus sees through the palsy to the man's real need, and he tells the man that his sins are forgiven. Jesus forgives the man's sin. And the scribes, the Jewish religious leaders, they're scandalized. Only God can forgive sin. All of our sin is sin against God. Psalm 51, verse 4 makes that plain. And so only God can forgive sin. As God himself says, in Isaiah 43, verse 25, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." God alone can forgive sins. So when Jesus says that he has forgiven this man his sins, he's claiming to be God. He's claiming to have the authority to do that which only God has the authority to do. And in Matthew, chapter 9, Jesus knows that this has offended the scribes. In verse 4, he asks them why they're offended. Then in verse 5, Jesus makes a very clear observation. It's easy to say that a person's sin has been forgiven. It's easy to say that because there's no real way that man can test it. When Jesus says that his man's sin has been forgiven, there's nothing to which the scribes can point to prove Jesus wrong. It's another thing altogether to tell this lame man to stand up and walk—to tell this man, who has had to be carried into Jesus's presence, to stand up and walk. That's hard. Because if Jesus tells this man to walk, and the man cannot walk, it would be obvious to anyone and to everyone that Jesus does not have the power or the authority to heal him. There would be something very concrete to which the scribes can point to show that Jesus has been wrong. In that way, telling the lame man to walk is harder than telling him that his sins are forgiven, because human beings can test the command to walk. And so Jesus turns to the man with the palsy, in verse 6, and he tells him to stand up, to take the bed on which he had been carried, and

to go to his house. And the man does it. He stands up. The bed that just moments before had been required to carry him, he takes it up, and he goes to his home. The lame man walks to his home. No one there could deny that Jesus had the power to heal that walking man. And, as Jesus puts it in verse 6, neither could they then deny that Jesus has the power to forgive sin. That thing which only God can do—forgive sin—Jesus can do it. The formerly lame walking man proves it. Jesus can forgive sin. Jesus exercises divine prerogatives, because Jesus is God. He's divine.

In fact, because he is divine, we find Jesus, in the Scripture, receiving divine worship. And this receipt of divine worship is itself a further evidence of Jesus's divinity. In the Scripture, of course, it's clear that worship is due to God alone. As we read in Deuteronomy, chapter 10, and verse 20: "Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by this name. He is thy praise, and he is thy God." Or, as Jesus puts it, in Luke, chapter 4, and verse 8: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Only God is to be worshipped. In Acts chapter 14, Paul and Barnabas were ministering in Lystra, and when Paul healed a man there, the people of Lystra tried to worship Paul and Barnabas. But Paul and Barnabas stopped them, they said that they were men just like them, they weren't God, and therefore they were not to be worshipped.

In the same way, in Revelation, chapter 22, at verse 8, the Apostle John, having seen the wonders and the beauties of the new Jerusalem, fell down at the feet of the angel who had shown him all of these things, to worship that angel. And what does the angel say? In Revelation, chapter 22, verse 9, the angel says, "See thou do it not:...worship God." God alone is to be worshipped. And what do we find a little earlier in Revelation? Among other places, in Revelation, chapter 5, at verse 13, we read of all creation crying out, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever." All of creation is worshipping the Lamb—they're worshipping Jesus. Jesus receives worship which is due to God alone, and he accepts that worship, because he is God. He's divine. Being fully God, Jesus receives, and he accepts divine worship. All of these things are spread throughout the Scriptures. All of these clear evidences of Jesus's divinity. He has divine names. He has divine attributes. He has divine power. He exercises divine prerogatives. He receives divine worship. Jesus is God. It's laced throughout all of the Scriptures.

But we want to take the time that we have remaining to look at four specific places in the Scripture, where we see the full divinity of Jesus with particular clarity and power. The first place, and really one of the places where we see the divinity of Jesus most clearly, and most movingly in the Scriptures, comes in the opening verses of the Gospel of John. In John, chapter 1, verses 1 through 4, we read this: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men."

In those verses, John speaks of this figure—the Word. Who or what is this "Word"? Well, that becomes clearer just a little bit later, in verse 14. In John 1, verse 14, we read: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." The Word is the one who became flesh. The Word is Jesus, as John names him in verse 17. So when John refers to the Word in these opening verses, he is referring to Jesus.

Now, John tells us a lot about Jesus in these verses, but I want us to notice just two of them. First, John explicitly says that Jesus is God, verse 1: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The Word was God. Now, of course, John also says that the Word was with God. And there, John is giving us a glimpse into the doctrine of the Trinity, but



that's a topic for a different set of lectures. Looking just at Jesus, just at the Word, John directly, explicitly says that he is God—he is divine.

But John also tells us something further. Notice how verse 1 starts: “In the beginning.” Those words may sound familiar to you perhaps. That's exactly the way that Genesis 1, verse 1, the very first verse of the entire Bible begins. Genesis 1:1 says, “In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth.” When John starts his gospel with exactly the same words, “In the beginning,” he's wanting to bring Genesis 1, verse 1 into our minds. In the beginning, before creation, when the only thing that existed was God himself, the Word was there, and he was God. In fact, as John tells us in verse 3, it was this Word, it was the Son who created, who made all things. So in these verses, John makes it unmistakably clear that Jesus is fully God. He directly calls him God, and he tells us that when only God existed, and then began to create all things, the Word was the one who did the creating. The Word is God—Jesus is God.

This same glorious truth is communicated to us in Colossians 1, so we want to look there as well. In Colossians 1, verses 15 through 20, Paul is speaking of Jesus, and he writes, “Who is the image of invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; and, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.”

Those verses are filled with the glory of Jesus, the divinity of God the Son. In verse 15, Paul begins by telling us that Jesus is the image of the invisible God. In Jesus, we see the God who is invisible. The God, who no one in the Old Testament could see, is seen in Jesus. When you look upon Jesus, you see the invisible God.

Paul then refers to the Son as “the firstborn of every creature.” Now, this statement gets misunderstood sometimes. Paul is not saying here that Jesus was the first creature born, or the first thing that God created. No, the idea of “the firstborn” has to do with power and authority. Jesus being “the firstborn of every creature” means that Jesus has unrivaled authority and power over all of creation. In fact, in verse 16, Paul tells us why this is—why does Jesus have authority over all of creation? Because, according to verse 16: “By him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him.” Jesus has unrivaled authority over all of creation, because he created all of creation. Paul is at pains there, in verse 16, to make plain that the Son created everything. Outside of God himself, there is nothing that exists that was not created by the Son. And therefore, he has authority over it. If you think back to verse 15, as I mentioned, Paul's statement that Jesus is the “firstborn of every creature,” sometimes gets confused to mean that Jesus was the first creature. Well, given what Paul has said here in verse 16, that simply can't be. If Jesus were a creature, then Paul could not say in verse 16 that Jesus created everything outside of God that exists, because he himself would be a creature that he had not created. Outside of God himself, anything and everything that exists, the Son created. Once again, we see that the Son is God, and he is doing the things that God does.

Paul doesn't stop there, of course, he goes on in verse 17 to say that “by him all things consist.” The Son didn't just create all things, he holds all things together, moment by moment. If the Son

somehow were to withdraw his hand, all of reality would evaporate. It would pass into in nonbeing. All of created reality was not only created by the Son, but it all is held together by the Son. This one is God.

Paul tells us the same thing in a more compressed way, in Philippians, chapter 2, verses 5 and 6. Philippians 2:5 and 6 is part of a larger, more familiar passage of Scripture, and we'll return to that passage in a later lecture. But we want for now to focus just on these two verses. In Philippians 2, verses 5 and 6, we read: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." What does the Apostle Paul, who wrote the book of Philippians, tell us there about Jesus? He tells us that Jesus was "in the form of God." That can sound like a peculiar way to state it, but what Paul is saying is that Jesus is God. Everything that makes God, God, Jesus is. He is in the form of God. He is God. What that means, among other things, is that, as Paul says in the second half of verse 6, for Jesus, equality with God is not robbery. When we speak of Jesus being God, we are not diminishing the glory or the grandeur of God at all. He is fully equal with God. He is, in fact, God. As I said, we'll come back to Philippians 2.

So in the interest of time, we need to move quickly to look at one final passage of Scripture, and that passage is Hebrews, chapter 1, verses 1 through 3. In those verses, we read this: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."

Now there are a lot of complexities here that we could explore, if we had more time. But at the very least, we find here that Jesus, God the Son, he is the brightness of the glory of God. He is the image of who God is. When we consider Jesus, when we read the words of Jesus, we are not considering one or reading the words of one who is very exalted, or one who is next to God. When we consider Jesus, we are considering God himself—the one who always has been and always will be the living God. When we read Jesus's word, we're reading the word of one who always has been, and always will be the living God.

In our time together this session, we've looked at a number of things. We've looked at ways in which Jesus is treated in Scripture, being given divine names, divine, worship, and all the rest. We've looked at specific passages that show us the outer margins of the glory of Jesus. And take them all together, and then remember Isaiah, chapter 42, verse 8, where God says, "I am the LORD, that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images." The living God of heaven and earth will not give his glory to another. Those who seek to claim it, he strikes down. And then we see Jesus receiving the glory of the living God. What are we to do, but fall down and cry out before him, as Thomas did, in John 20, verse 28: "My Lord, and my God." In Jesus, we have to do with the living God, the one who was, and who is, and who is to come. He is God, and he deserves our worship, and our very lives.

In our next session, we will look at how this one, Jesus, who is fully God, also is fully man.

# SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

by Dr. Stephen Myers

## *Module 4 ~ Lecture 3*

### **The Humanity of Christ**

In our time together, we've been considering this great question, this most important question in all of life: Whom do you say that Jesus is? If we take the Scriptures as our foundation, whom do we say that Jesus is? And in our last time together, we saw something critically important: Jesus is God. Jesus is fully God, fully divine. So if we ask the question, Whom do you say that Jesus is? A critically important part of the answer has to be that Jesus is God. But there's more to the answer. Yes, Jesus is fully God, but he's also something else. In 1 Timothy, chapter 2, verse 5, the Apostle Paul tells us that we are saved by "the man Christ Jesus." Again, in Romans, chapter 5, and verse 15, we are told that the grace of God comes "by one man, Jesus Christ." Central to Christianity, is the fact that Jesus Christ is fully God; but equally central to Christianity is the fact that Jesus Christ is fully man, that the Word became flesh, as John, chapter 1, verse 14 tells us. This is what we refer to as the humanity of Christ. Christ is fully human. He's fully a man. He is as much human as you or I are, in fact, he's even more human, and more perfectly human than you or I are. But we'll come to that.

When we looked at Jesus's divinity, we saw a host of places in Scripture, where Jesus is treated as or spoken of as fully God. When we come to consider the humanity of Christ, we find the same situation, yet in regard to Jesus's humanity. There are scores of places in Scripture where we are unmistakably confronted with the humanity of Jesus, unavoidably confronted with the shocking fact that Jesus is fully and perfectly human. Often, you might hear people refer to "the incarnation". And that word refers to this fact, that Jesus came in the flesh, perfect in his humanity. *Carne* comes from the Latin for "in the flesh. Jesus came in the flesh. He took to himself the fulness of human nature. He was incarnate. In other words, Jesus is fully a man.

Perhaps the most elementary evidence that he was fully man is that he was born. And we read in Galatians, chapter 4, verse 4, Jesus was "made of a woman," or "born of a woman." Both the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke begin by telling us about this very birth. In Luke, chapter 1, verses 26 through 35, the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, who was a virgin, and told her, in Luke chapter 1, verse 31: "Thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS." Mary, of course, is shocked by this. As a virgin, she should not be pregnant, so Mary asks how this is to be, and Gabriel says to her, in verse 35: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Now here, we confront a mystery. We confront, really, a miracle. In the Old Testament, in Isaiah, chapter 7, verse 14, God had decreed through Isaiah that a virgin would give birth to a child, as testimony that God would keep all of his promises. And here is that prophesied birth. A virgin, who should be physically incapable of being pregnant, is pregnant, and she'll give birth to a son.

On the one hand, this very much points to Jesus's divinity, which we discussed last time. He is conceived by the Holy Ghost. He will be the Holy One. In many ways, this points to Jesus's divinity. But it also, just as clearly, points to his humanity. In verse 31, Gabriel says that Mary will "conceive in thy womb." In verse 35, he says that Jesus will be "born of thee." Mary is Jesus's mother, in the same way, and to the same extent that your mother or my mother are our mothers. Think about that. When Jesus came into this world, he came with the genetic information of Mary. Jesus would have looked like Mary. We can't know the details, of course, but perhaps his hair was exactly the same color as hers, or perhaps when he smiled, his smile looked just like his mother's. He was from her womb. Again, as we read in Galatians 4, verse 4, he was "made of a woman." He was born as no other man ever has been born—he was born of a virgin. But he was born, of a virgin. He is fully man.

As fully man, Jesus thus partakes of all that constitutes humanity. He has a real human body. In 1 John, chapter 1, verse 1, John is very clear that the disciples were able to touch Jesus. He wasn't some apparition. He wasn't just appearing like a man. No, Jesus is a man. He had a real human body. In John 20, verse 27, even after Jesus's resurrection, the disciple Thomas is able to feel his body—able to feel even the wounds that Jesus had suffered on the cross. In 2 John, chapter 1, verse 7, John makes a startling statement. He writes: "Many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist." Jesus came in the flesh. He was fully human in every way. And to believe or teach otherwise is contrary to the gospel. Jesus is fully man.

As such, Jesus doesn't only have a human body, he also has a human mind. We see that in Matthew, chapter 24, verse 36. He has a human soul, as we see in Luke 23, verse 46. He has a human will, which we see in Luke 22, and verse 42. We will come back to some of those passages in our next lecture, when we think about how Jesus is both fully God and fully man. But for now, we can at least point to them as places in the Scripture where we see that Jesus possesses, Jesus is, all that is involved in being human. There is no part of humanity that Jesus lacks. There's no component of human nature that Jesus lacks. When the Word became flesh, he took to himself a full human nature—a human body, a human soul.

Now at this point, we have to be very clear. Jesus Christ was totally and perfectly free from sin. In Hebrews, chapter 4, verse 15, we read that Jesus Christ is like us in every way, "yet without sin." Or, as Hebrews states it in chapter 7, verse 26: "[Jesus] is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." In 2 Corinthians 5, verse 21, Paul writes plainly that Jesus "knew no sin." It's striking what we read in Matthew, chapter 27, verse 23. There, Jesus is before his accusers, his trial is being considered by Pilate, and Jesus's accusers scour Jerusalem to find one man—one man—who would bring one charge against Jesus. And they couldn't find one, not one. Even those enemies who always were lurking, always were seeking out a false word, always were watching for one slip, they couldn't produce one single thing that Jesus had done wrong. Jesus is perfectly free from the taint of sin. He was holy in Mary's womb—we saw that just a moment ago in Luke, chapter 1—and he remained free from sin his entire life.

Now here, a question can present itself. If all men are sinners, and Jesus was not a sinner, how can we say that he was fully man? We can say both things. We can say that Jesus is perfectly free from sin, and that he is fully man, because sin—fallenness—is not true human nature. It is the distortion of human nature. When Adam and Eve were created in the Garden of Eden, they were fully human, perfectly human, but they were without sin prior to the fall. A body of flesh is necessary to being a man. If you don't have a body of flesh, you're not a man. Sin is not necessary to being a

man. Jesus is fully, perfectly a man, and part of the perfection of his humanity, is that he is without sin. In his full humanity, Jesus actually is what mankind was created to be—holy, undefiled. So we have to be very clear, on the one hand, that Jesus is completely like us—he is fully man. And at the same time, we have to be very clear that he is without sin. To quote Hebrews, chapter 4, verse 15, again, he is like us in every way, “yet without sin.”

But his likeness to us in every other way that we find in Jesus is profound, and it’s complete. He really is fully man. In the Scripture, we see, for example, that Jesus experienced normal growth and development. In Luke, chapter 2, and verse 52, Luke is writing about Jesus, and he writes that “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.” Jesus grew up. He was a toddler, and then he was an adolescent, and then he was a teenager. And all the while, he was growing taller, he was growing stronger. He was gaining a reputation, doubtless a reputation as the kind son of the carpenter. And in Luke, chapter 2, verses 42 to 52, the passage leading up to the verse that I just read, we read about Jesus at age twelve. And at the relatively young age of twelve, Jesus already had such a profound understanding of the Scriptures, that he was able to astonish the religious leaders in Jerusalem with his knowledge. After that passage in Luke, chapter 2, we’re not really told much about Jesus until he was much older, and entering into his public ministry, that period of about three years prior to his crucifixion and resurrection. And when we meet this adult Jesus, we see that he still is in every way, fully man.

While Jesus wasn’t sinful, not fallen, he did have human limitations. After a long day of preaching and travelling, he would get tired. We read of one such instance in Mark, chapter 4, verse 38. Jesus got thirsty, as we read in John, chapter 19, verse 28. Jesus was localized. He was in a place, and you had to come to the spot where he was to see him and to hear him—you had to have a line of vision. This basic facts are laced through the account of Zacchaeus, in Luke, chapter 19, verses 1 through 4, for example. Jesus had human emotions—the full range, in fact, of sinless human emotions. Jesus was joyful; he laughed, and enjoyed time and fellowship with his disciples. We see that in John, chapter 15, verse 11. Jesus loved others, as we see in John, chapter 11, verse 5. He had a particular love, a special love, for his mother, which we see evidenced in John, chapter 19, verses 26 and 27. When Jesus saw the vulnerable, he had compassion on them, as he does in John, chapter 8, verse 7. He pitied those who were in aching need, as we see in Mark, chapter 10, verses 50 to 52. The ravages of sin in a fallen world frustrated him. We see it doing so, in John, chapter 11, verse 33. When Jesus’s friends died, he wept. He does so in John, chapter 11, verse 35. Jesus knew anguish so deep, that only his own holy integrity, and the ministry of the Spirit, and the ministry of angels kept him from collapse, as we find in Gethsemane, in Luke, chapter 22, verse 44. Jesus knew what it was to tremble at the prospect of doing God’s will in hard providences. He faces that trembling in Matthew, chapter 26, verses 36 through 46. He knew the horror, the desolation, of coming under the just wrath of God. We see it in Matthew, chapter 27, verse 46. If there is a sinless human emotion, Jesus felt it.

In all of these things, Jesus was, once again, fully human. He was just like every other man, and any other man in that way. In Isaiah, chapter 53, verse 2, we’re told that the “suffering servant,”—and that suffering servant is Jesus—we are told that [Jesus] hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.” Now that verse doesn’t mean that Jesus was ugly, it means that there was nothing visibly different about him. He didn’t stand out. You could walk past him on the streets of Nazareth, and he would just blend right in with everyone else. He was ordinary. We read in the Gospels, in places like Mark, chapter 6, verse 2, that people were astonished at Jesus’s teachings and his miracles because, to all appearances, he was ordinary.



He didn't look like he should be able to do the things that he did. The people of Jesus's home town, the people who would have known him his entire life, to them, he was just the ordinary son of an ordinary carpenter. We see that reaction in Mark, chapter 6, verse 3.

Jesus was ordinary. He was born. He grew up, all the while experiencing human limitations, human emotions, just like any other man, yet without sin, and then he died. Now, Jesus's death was utterly unique, and we will come to that, but it also had a commonality with all human death. Jesus died. One unmistakable indication that Jesus is fully human is that he died. And he left on the cross a corpse that Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus had to take down, and bear the heavy weight of it to Joseph's newly hewn tomb. We read of this in John, chapter 19, verses 38 through 42. And that body, that corpse of Jesus, remained there in the tomb until Jesus rose in resurrection power and might. And in his resurrection, Jesus remains—he still is this very moment—fully man.

You see, humanity isn't something that the Son took to himself for his earthly ministry, only to lay it aside at the resurrection. No, the incarnation is ongoing. It never ends. We mentioned just a little while ago, out of John, chapter 20, that Thomas is able to feel Jesus's resurrected human body. The resurrected Jesus is able to eat with his disciples, in John, chapter 21, verses 12 to 14. Now, Jesus's resurrection body seems to be quite different than his body was prior to the resurrection. From what we find in John, chapter 20, verse 19, it appears that Jesus's resurrection body is able to disappear and reappear, for example. So Jesus's human body has new capacities in the resurrection, but it still is his human body. In Philippians, chapter 3, verses 20 and 21, the Apostle Paul writes this: "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." Did you hear that? As Christians, our hope, our concerns, our conversation, Paul says, is in heaven, because Jesus is there. And when he comes back, when Jesus returns at the end of the age, Jesus shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body. Jesus's body, even more, Jesus's humanity is what ours will be when we are glorified. Our humanity then will be like his is now.

Jesus was, and he continues to be, and he ever shall be fully a man, perfect in his humanity, from his birth from a woman, through an ordinary life of growth and development, through all of the sinless limitations of humanity, through all of the panoply of sinless emotions to which we are subject, all the way to the last desolation at death, and the tomb, and even the resplendent glory of resurrection—through all of it, Jesus was fully and perfectly human, perfect in his humanity. Jesus didn't come to hover just above the hardships and the realities of life in a fallen world, himself unfallen. Jesus came into this world and was more perfectly human than you or I. And this fact, the fact of the perfect humanity of Jesus, it is absolutely essential to the salvation of God's people. The incarnation is essential, it is necessary for the salvation of God's people. In Hebrews, chapter 2, verses 14 and 15, we read this: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Do you follow the reasoning there? In order to save flesh and blood, the Son had to become flesh and blood. To save men and women, Jesus had to become a man. If Jesus's flesh and blood is not just like ours, he cannot save us. The incarnation was absolutely utterly necessary, because an unincarnate Son could not save his people from their sin. He couldn't die in their place. He couldn't bear their judgment. He had to become man. The same necessity appears in Galatians, chapter 4, verses 4 and 5. There, Paul writes: "But when the fulness of the time was

come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” By being born of a woman—and we’ve discussed all that’s involved in that already—by being born of a woman, the Son came under the law, the passage says. And that coming under the law was necessary if Jesus was to save those who are under the law. Again, in order to save humans, the Son had to be human. The incarnation was utterly necessary for the salvation of sinners.

In fact, the incarnation continues to be necessary for the work that Jesus does not. Later in the course, we’ll discuss the ongoing work of Christ in more detail. But one of the things that Jesus does for his people, that he does for you this very day, is that he intercedes for us. He pleads our cause before the throne of heaven. And in Hebrews, chapter 4, verses 14 through 16, we read this: “Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” We are able to hold fast our profession,” verse 14 says, meaning that we are able to stand in the faith, we’re able to come boldly before the throne of grace, finding there mercy and sustaining grace, verse 16 says. Why? Why do we know such comfort? Because our great high priest, Jesus Christ, is fully man. He knows the weaknesses and the limitations of humanity from the inside. Because Jesus is fully man, because of his perfect humanity, Jesus is able to save you and grant you peace to approach the throne of grace even today, because he’s one of us.

Before we close for this session, let me offer you one perhaps uncomfortable challenge that’s set before us, when we consider the perfect humanity of Jesus. As humans, we are expert at blaming our sin on our humanity. We’re jealous of our neighbor because that’s just how humans are. Or we look lustfully, because that’s just what humans do. We’re rebellious against parents, or we are impatient with children, because that’s just how humans are. Or maybe it’s because we’re tired, or lonesome. Brothers and sisters, Jesus Christ, perfect in humanity and without sin, burns all of those lies to the ground. He who is perfect man walked through this life, with all of its fatigue, and isolation, and pain, and he never even skirted the edge of sin. He was holy, harmless, and undefiled. And that means, among other things, that we need to call our sin what it is. It’s sin. It’s not the incapacity of our humanity. It’s sin. And so we need to repent of it, and confess to the one who knew no sin, and who now makes intercession for us at the throne of grace.

Last session, we learned about the perfect divinity of Jesus. Jesus is fully and perfectly God. There never was a moment in which the Son did not exist, or in which he was not the radiant glory of the living God. In this session, we’ve learned about the perfect humanity of Jesus. Jesus is fully and perfectly man. There is no part of our humanity, sin excepted, that the Son did not take to himself, and that is not still his own in the radiance of heaven. Who do we say that Jesus is? We say that he is fully God, and we say that he is fully man. Jesus is fully God and fully man. In our next session, we’ll try to think just a little bit about what exactly that means, and, as far as we’re able to understand, how it works.