



UNIT 2 – THE PERSON AND WORK OF CHRIST

INTRODUCTION

For any who are studying doctrine for the first time, you will find it a thrilling and enriching experience. Our theme for this unit, “The Person and Work of Christ”, will give us insights that will build and strengthen our faith. As Christians confronted by the challenge of materialism, the cults and liberal theology, we need to be thoroughly grounded in our faith. Knowledge that leads to deeper faith is the aim of this course.

The study draws together the threads of evidence we find in our Bibles, and the resultant pattern presents a clear and balanced portrayal of our Lord.

SOME SUGGESTIONS REGARDING STUDY

1. The course is divided into 10 lessons. This will enable the student to do his or her work on a weekly basis for the term of three months.
2. Each lesson has 5 questions which are used instead of an exam. The answers to these questions should be about ½ page each in length. They should be sent to the Co-ordinator Distance Education for marking at the end of five lessons, do not wait until the whole unit is complete.
3. The questions are designed to push the student to study beyond the notes, to the Bible itself, and, also to think of an application.
4. Set aside definite times for study. Little will be gained if the course is skimmed over.
5. Read each lesson straight through first, in order to gain an overall view of the topic.
6. Make your own notes as the Scriptures are followed.
7. It is suggested that the New Revised Standard Version, New International Version or Good News Bible is used.
8. Throughout the course, additional reading is noted. *Many Witnesses, One Lord* by William Barclay, (S.C.M. Press), will supplement the lessons on The Person of Christ. *Introducing New Testament Theology* by A.M. Hunter, (S.C.M. Press), will be best read with the second part of the course, The Work of Christ.
9. A glossary of the more unusual terms is included.
10. There is a 6th question in each lesson which is to be used for discussion for those doing the unit in a group. The answers to the 6th question should not be sent in for marking.



GLOSSARY FOR UNIT 2

1. Apostolic - relating to the apostles
2. Ascension - ascent of Jesus into heaven on fortieth day after His Resurrection
3. Atonement - reconciliation of God and man by Jesus
4. Attribute - quality ascribed to something
5. Blasphemous - impious or profane
6. Cosmic - of the universe
7. Crucible - melting pot used for melting metals
8. Deity - divine status
9. Expiation - paying the penalty for, making amends for sin
10. Incarnate - becoming flesh, in human form
11. Levitical - of the tribe of Levi
12. Paradox – self-contradictory or apparently absurd statement
13. Passion - the sufferings of Christ on the cross
14. Penal - concerned with afflicting punishment by law
15. Personification – the attribution of personal character to inanimate objects or abstract ideas
16. Pre-temporal - before time
17. Prologue - introduction
18. Ratified - confirmed or accepted by formal consent
19. Reconciliation - making friendly after estrangement; healing or settling a quarrel
20. Revelation - disclosing of knowledge
21. Theology - study of system of religion (especially Christianity); rational analysis of a religious faith
22. Venerated - considered worthy of deep respect; revered
23. Vocation - divine call to a career or occupation



THE PERSON OF CHRIST

LESSON 1

Introduction:

The central theme of the word of God is **Jesus Christ**. He said of the Old Testament Scriptures, "it is they that bear witness of me" (John 4:39), and "everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled. (Luke 23:44).

The name 'Jesus', is the Latinized form of the Hebrew word "Joshua", and means 'God will save' (Matt. 1:21). "Christ" is a title from the Greek version of a Hebrew word meaning, "**the anointed one**" or the "**Messiah**" (Mark 8:27-29). Its early use in connection with the name of Jesus was a statement of faith declaring that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah of Jewish expectations.

The place of Jesus Christ is central in the Christian system, because in a unique way, Christianity rests on its founder.

"The relation of Jesus Christ to Christianity differs entirely from that of all other founders towards the religions or philosophies which bear their names. Platonism, for example, may be defined as a method of philosophic thought from Plato; Mohammedanism as the belief in the revelation granted to Mohammed; Buddhism as the following of the principles enunciated by Buddha. But Christianity is in essence adherence to the person of Jesus Christ."

Griffith Thomas.

Remove the person of Jesus Christ, and Christianity is but an empty shell. Christianity IS Christ.

Historical Perspective:

Jesus of Nazareth was born about 4BC in Palestine, and was executed at Jerusalem about 29AD, during the procuratorship of Pontius Pilate.

The land was a province of the Roman Empire and the people unwilling subjects of a great power.

The record of his life is in the New Testament; nothing is known of him apart from these documents. The fact that secular records so far discovered, from the first hundred years after the ministry of Christ contain only a few fleeting references to him, is only natural. Christianity was but one of the many religions and cults originating in the East in the Roman world, and there was little in it to attract the interest of pagan historians. Only when it came into conflict with the authorities did it merit any mention. It is of significance to note that when they did refer to Christianity, Christ is recognised as being the founder. References to Christ are found in the writings of Josephus, the Jewish historian, but the authenticity of these is open to doubt.

In the early centuries AD, not even the greatest haters of Christianity had any idea of denying the fact of the historical Jesus. Nor at the present day does any objective historian deny this fact. Not only his life and death, but also his resurrection, must be reckoned among the best established facts of history.



Original Presentation: The New Testament

The New Testament documents constitute the earliest, authentic and completely indispensable material concerning the Person and Work of Christ. The writers (even though several different men are involved, each having a different purpose) agree on two basic facts. Firstly, the life of Jesus was completely human (exactly like us, yet without sin, Hebrews 2:14-18; 4:15) and secondly, Jesus was more than human: he was God revealed in the flesh (John 1:1-3, 14, 18) and has made known the love and redemptive activity of God.

The Presentation of the Synoptic Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke

The word "Synoptic" is from two Greek words meaning to "see together". Much of the material in these gospels is common to the three, and can be set down in parallel columns, thus their common matter can be looked at together, eg; (Matt. 9:1-8; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-26). They are placed at the beginning of the New Testament because they contain the historical material about Jesus' life.

(Some of Paul's letters were written earlier than the Gospels, but it is obvious why the Gospels should stand at the beginning of our New Testament).

Although they are an historical record of the life of Jesus, the Gospels are not biographies in the accepted sense of the term. There has been a selection of incidents and sayings, with great detail given concerning the events of the last week of his life.

The Gospels present Jesus as he lived, worked, taught and gave himself for man. Jesus' awareness of his uniqueness finds expression in these words, "all things have been delivered to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the son chooses to reveal Him". (Matt. 11:27).

The characteristics of the life and ministry of Jesus may be summarised as follows:

1. His faith in his Father was a conscious trust that expressed itself in complete confidence and dependence on God. This may be seen in his temptation experience in the wilderness. (Matt. 4:1-11).

His resolution to make the Cross his goal, knowing that he would be raised from the dead. (Matt. 17:12; Mark 8:31, 10:32-34; Luke 17:22-25).

This confidence and dependence is also seen in the place prayer had in our Lord's life, (Matt. 14:23; Mark 1:35, 6:46; Luke 6:12, 9:28, 29).

2. Love for mankind was the impelling force that took him to the Cross. Love for sinful man was initiated in the heart of God and is displayed in its fullest splendour in the Person of Jesus as He unswervingly moves toward his predestined goal, Calvary.
3. Coupled with this determined love, was the complete and utter obedience to the Father's will. "Must" was often upon the lips of Jesus. First revealed in the only incident recorded of His boyhood, Luke 2:49 and in his obedience at his baptism, (Matt. 3:13-17).



At the beginning of his public ministry and all the way through it, "I must preach the good news of the Kingdom of God", Luke 4:43, obedience is the key note, (Mark 8:31, 9:12; Luke 24:6-8).

This attitude of obedience that characterised the whole of the life of Jesus reaches the heights during His Gethsemane experience. "Father, if thou art willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done." (Luke 22:42).

The cry of the crucified "It is finished" is the triumphant expression of victorious obedience. The resurrection is God's sign that obedience has been complete and the great work of redemption accomplished.

Though the Gospels are brief, they are the foundation upon which we build an adequate understanding of Jesus. They present him both in simplicity and majestic splendour, for "He is greater, indeed, than any record of his life; yet it also has caught from him the consistent tone of simple majesty." (H.R. Mackintosh, *"The Person of Jesus Christ"* page 9)

Question 1:

What do you know about Jesus' birth? (Matt. 1:18-2:2; Luke 1:26-38; 2:1-21)

Question 2:

What shows us Jesus was completely human? Read all these references but use the most appropriate ones to make a half-page summary. (Heb. 2:14-18; 4:15; Matt. 8:24; 21:18; 26:38; Mark 1:35; 13:32; Luke 2:52; 22:41-45; John 4:6; 11:35; 19:28)

Question 3:

Why is it vital to the Christian's faith to believe in the deity of Jesus? What scriptures seem to you most convincing in this matter? (Matt. 8:26; 17:27; Luke 2:7-10; 5:4-6 John 1:12, 48; 5:19, 20; 8:29; 10:28; 11:43, 44; 14:10, 30)

Question 4:

Matthew, Mark and Luke are known as Synoptic Gospels as they "see together". Comment on how these references "see together": Matt.9:2-7 ; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-26.

Question 5:

How can you summarise Jesus' prayer life? (Matt. 14:23; Mark 1:35; 6:46; Luke 6:12; 9:28, 29)

QUESTION FOR GROUP STUDY:

Summarise Jesus' attitude of obedience to God. What does He tell us to do? (John 14:15, 21; 15:10) What does this mean for you in practice?