

# BACK TO BIBLE STUDY

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***Objective: to discuss who Jesus Christ is, and why He is central to the faith of the***

***Christianity is about Jesus Christ***

“At its heart, Christianity is not a beautifully complex philosophical system like Buddhism, a towering code of morals like Islam, or a delicate set of rituals as some churches have presented it. The crucial starting point for any discussion about this topic is the fact that ‘Christianity’ – as the word suggests – is all about a person, Jesus Christ” (Dickson 1999:11).

Christianity, although initially regarded as a Jewish sect, was different from Judaism. The Jews had faith in God, but most did not accept Jesus as the Christ. Another group alluded to in the New Testament, the gentile “God Fearers”, of whom Cornelius was one (Acts 10:2), also had faith in God, but, again, not all accepted Jesus as the Messiah.

“The person of Jesus Christ is of central importance to Christian theology. Whereas ‘theology’ could be defined as ‘talk about God’ in general, ‘Christian theology’ accords a central role to Jesus Christ” (McGrath 1997:322).

“Christianity is not a set of self-contained and free-standing ideas; it represents a sustained response to the questions raised by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christianity is an historical religion, which came into being in response to a specific set of events, which center upon Jesus Christ..” (ibid).

There is no Christianity without Jesus Christ. Who was this Jesus? What was so

special about him that Satan wanted to destroy him and suppress the story of His birth? (Revelation 12: 4-5; Matthew 2:1-18)? What was it about Him that made His disciples so bold that they were accused of turning the world upside down (Acts 17:6)?

***Reflection***

**How would you distinguish Christianity from other faiths?**

***God comes to us through Christ***

The last study ended by stressing that we can know God only through Jesus Christ (Matthew 11:27), who is the true reflection of God’s inner being (Hebrews 1:3). It is through Jesus that we can know what God is like because Jesus alone is the revealed image of the Father (Colossians 1:15).

The Gospels explain that God entered the human condition through the person of Jesus Christ. The apostle John wrote that “in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). The Word is identified as Jesus, who “became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14).

Thus Jesus, the Word, is the second person of the Godhead, in whom “dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:9). Jesus was both fully human and fully divine, Son of Man and Son of God. “For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell” (Colossians 1:19), “and of His fullness we have all received” (John 1:16).

“Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no

reputation, taking on the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men” (Philippians 2:5-7). This passage explains that Jesus divested Himself of the prerogatives of divinity, becoming one of us, so that “those who believe in His name” would have “the right to become the children of God” (John 1:12).

“We believe ourselves to be confronted personally, historically and eschatologically with the very Godness of God in the humanity of this particular man, Jesus of Nazareth” (Jenkins 2001:98).

When we meet Jesus, we meet God. “If you had known Me,” says Jesus, “you would have known my Father also” (John 8:19).

### *Reflection*

**In what way does the humanity of Christ impact your faith?**

**Does the fact that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us help us understand how God has empathy with us when we have problems? (See Hebrews 2:14, 4:14-16)**

### *Jesus is the Creator and Sustainer of all things*

In discussing “the Word” John explains that “He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” (John 1:2-3).

Paul expounds the idea further: “All things were created by Him and for Him” (Colossians 1:16). The book of Hebrews also discusses “Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels” (i.e. he became human), “for whom are all things and by whom are all things” (2:9-10). Jesus Christ “is before all things and in Him all things consist” (Colossians 1:17). He “upholds all things by His power” (Hebrews 1:3).

The Jewish leaders did not understand His divine nature. Jesus told them, “I proceeded forth and came from God”, and “before Abraham was, I AM” (John 8:42, 58). The “I AM” reference was to the name God used for Himself when speaking to Moses (Exodus 3:14), and, consequently, the Pharisees and teachers of the law sought to stone Christ for blasphemy because He was claiming to be divine (John 8:59).

### *Jesus is the Son of God*

John wrote of Jesus, “We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (1:14). Jesus was the one and only Son of the Father.

When Jesus was baptized God proclaimed to Him “You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased” (Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22).

When Peter, James and John received a vision of the Kingdom of God, Peter regarded Jesus as being on the same level as Moses and Elijah. He did not realize that Jesus had “been counted worthy of more glory than Moses” (Hebrews 3:3), and that someone greater than the prophets was in their midst. Again, a voice came from heaven, and exclaimed, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!” (Matthew 17:5). Because Jesus is the Son of God, we should hear what He has to say.

This was the central message in the preaching of the apostles as they spread the good news about salvation in Christ. Note Acts 9:20, speaking of Saul before he became known as Paul: “immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God”.

Jesus was “declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead” (Romans 1:4).

It is the sacrifice of the Son of God that enables the believer to be saved. “For God

so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). “The Father has sent the Son as Saviour of the world” (1 John 4:14).

### ***Jesus is Lord and King***

Throughout the New Testament Jesus Christ is referred to as Lord.

The message of the angel to the shepherds at the birth of Christ was this: “For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11).

The commission to John the Baptist was to “prepare the way of the Lord” (Mark 1:1-4; John 3:1-6).

In opening remarks in various letters Paul, James, Peter and John allude to “the Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 1:2-3; 2 Corinthians 2:2; Ephesians 1:2; James 1:1; 1 Peter 1:3; 2 John 3; etc).

The idea of Lord implies sovereignty over all aspects of the believer’s faith and spiritual life. Revelation 19:16 reminds us that the Word of God, Jesus Christ, is “KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS”.

Modern theologian Michael Jenkins puts it this way in his book *Invitation to Theology*: “His claim on us is absolute and comprehensive. We belong to the Lord, Jesus Christ, utterly and completely, body and soul, in life and in death” (2001:122).

### ***Reflection***

**What is the position of Jesus in relation to other biblical figures?**

**If Jesus is the Son of God, our Lord and King, what authority does he have over our faith?**

### ***Jesus is the prophesied Messiah, the Saviour***

In Daniel 9:25 God explains that the Messiah, the Prince, will come to deliver His people. Messiah, in Hebrew, means “the anointed one”. Andrew, an early follower of Jesus, realized that in Jesus he and the other disciples had “found the Messiah”, which, taken from the Greek translation, is rendered in English as “the Christ” (John 1:41).

Many Old Testament prophecies spoke of this Deliverer to come. In his account of the story of Christ, Matthew details frequently how those prophecies concerning the Messiah had their fulfillment in the life and ministry of the Son of God, who, in becoming flesh, was conceived miraculously of the Holy Spirit in a virgin called Mary, and was called Jesus, meaning Saviour: “so all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet” (Matthew 1:22).

Jesus said “all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me” (Luke 24:44). He had to fulfill the messianic predictions.

The other Gospel writers testify that Jesus is the Christ (Mark 8:29; Luke 2:11, 4:41, 9:20; John 6:69, 11:27, 20:31).

The early Christians taught that “the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles” (Acts 26:23). In other words, that Jesus “is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world” (John 4:42).

### ***Jesus is returning in mercy and judgment***

For the Christian all of history leads to and flows away from the events of the life of Christ. The story of his life is central to our faith.

But that story is not over. It continues from New Testament times into eternity. The Bible explains that Jesus lives His life in us, and how He does that will be discussed in a subsequent study.

Also, Jesus will return (John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 2 Peter 3:10-13; etc).

He is returning, not to deal with sin (which has been already dealt with through his sacrifice), but for salvation (Hebrews 9:28). At his "throne of grace" (Hebrews 4:16) "He will judge the world in righteousness" (Acts 17:31).

"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 3:20).

### *Reflection*

**How would you explain to someone that Jesus is the Messiah?**

**How does the return of Christ affect your faith?**

### *Conclusion*

Scripture reveals Jesus as the incarnate Word, the Son of God, the Lord, the King, the Messiah, the Saviour of the world who will return a second time for mercy and for justice. He is central to the faith of the Christian believer because without Christ there is no Christianity. We need to listen to what he has to say.

**From the Statement of Beliefs of the Grace Communion International/ Worldwide Church of God UK:**

**<http://www.wcgc.org/lit/aboutus/beliefs/son.htm>**

## **God the Son**

**"God the Son is the second Person of the Godhead, eternally begotten of the Father. He is the Word and the express image of the Father, by whom and for whom all things were created. He was sent by the Father as Jesus Christ to be God revealed in the flesh for our salvation. Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, fully God and fully human, two natures in one Person. He is the Son of God and Lord of all, worthy of worship, honour and reverence. As the prophesied Saviour of humanity, he died for our sins, was raised bodily from the dead, and ascended to heaven, from where he mediates between humanity and God. He will come again in glory to reign as King of kings over all nations in the kingdom of God."**

([John 1:1, 10, 14](#); [Colossians 1:15-16](#); [Hebrews 1:3](#); [John 3:16](#); [Titus 2:13](#); [Matthew 1:20](#); [Acts 10:36](#); [1 Corinthians 15:3-4](#); [Hebrews 1:8](#); [Revelation 19:16](#))

### **Additional reading material**

See list of articles sourced by the Worldwide Church of God on:

<http://www.wcgc.org/lit/jesus/default.htm>

Dickson, John. *Simply Christianity: beyond religion*. 1999. Australia: Matthias Media.

Jenkins, Michael. *Invitation to Theology*. 2001. USA: InterVarsity Press.

McGrath, Alistair. *Christian Theology: An Introduction*. 1994, 1997. UK: Blackwell Publishers

### *Next Study*

***What did Jesus our Lord have to say, and how does that affect us?***