

Lead 360 - Christian Theology
Session III, Part I: Belief in Jesus Christ

I. Introduction

1. Key question: "Who is Jesus Christ for us today?"
2. Christian theology is not Christian unless it is centred in Jesus Christ.
3. Christ distinguishes Christianity from all other religious faiths.

II. Identity of Jesus the Christ: His Person

1. He is God, 2 Pet. 1:1 (Deity).
 - (1) Wrong ways of identifying who Jesus Christ is:
 - a. Gnostics: no real humanity
 - b. Unbelieving Jews: no real divinity
 - c. Adoptionists: no lasting divinity
 - d. Arius: no real deity, only a "divine creature"
 - (2) Nicene Creed: He is "of God" and "from God".
 - (3) As God's eternal Son, He is our eternal hope and worthy of worship.
2. He is human
 - (1) Apollinarius (4th century) denied Jesus had a human soul (spirit); if He did, how could He avoid sin? But "what he has not assumed, he cannot heal". If not human as we are human, we have no Saviour.
 - (2) NT clearly affirms Jesus is fully human yet without sin (Heb. 4:15).
3. He is divine AND human in one Person.
 - (1) Eutyches (5th century) thought His humanity and divinity blended into one nature: the divine.
 - (2) Bishop of Rome Leo's Christology affirmed at Council of Chalcedon: "Jesus is divine AND human in one historical Person." He has two natures in one person (Col. 2:9). He is the God-Man.
 - (3) The incarnation means God became human (Matt. 1:23; 2 Cor. 5:21).

III. Mission (Work) of Christ: Atonement

1. Introduction
 - (1) Why did Jesus come? To die for our sins.
 - (2) How can the death of someone over 2,000 years ago atone for our sins? Who is it that dies and is raised?
2. Images of the cross: Why are there so many in the Bible and Christian history?
 - (1) Biblical images in Christian history conveyed meaning of cross:
 - a. First 1000 years: Christ is victorious over sin through the cross.
 - b. Middle Ages: Christ satisfied God's honour (Anselm)
Christ shows us the example of God's love (Abelard)
 - c. Reformed: Christ was the penal substitute for our sins (Calvin)
 - (2) The Bible has several images of the meaning of the cross: sacrifice, liberation of the captives, reconciliation, etc. ALL of them important and necessary and NONE of them exhaust the meaning of the cross.
3. The cross has no saving significance without Christ's historical resurrection. We understand the cross by the light that comes from an empty tomb (Rom. 1:1-6; 1 Cor. 15).