

**A Simplified Look at a
Complicated Belief**

Part II

The Life of Jesus

Parts 9-12

UNDERSTANDING CHRISTIANITY

Part 9 – The Silence is Broken

Summary of the Old Testament

**-God's people, living in God's place, under God's rule
enjoying God's blessings**

-Old Testament we see this theme working through the events of human history:

1. God's Kingdom established – Creation

God created mankind to rule over the earth, but in obedience to His command (under His rule).

2. God's kingdom rejected – Sin

Mankind disobeyed God (rejected His rule). The result was separation from God's presence and death.

1

Sin Separates Us From God



3. God's kingdom pre-figured – the Old Covenant

God made a covenant relationship with the people of Israel, in three stages:

(i) Abraham was given the sign of circumcision and three promises:

- a. The land of Canaan would belong to his descendants
- b. He would have many descendants who would become a great nation
- c. All nations would be blessed through his descendants

(ii) Moses was given the Law of God:

- a. The Law showed the people how they should live
- b. How they should worship God through sacrifice
- c. They needed God's forgiveness for their sin

(iii) David was given an additional promise that his descendants would be kings forever

-”But the LORD did not want to destroy Judah, for he had made a covenant with David and promised that his descendants would continue to rule, shining like a lamp forever.”

-2 Kings 8:19 NLT



Module 2: The Life of Jesus TITLE PAGE

Part 9 – The silence is Broken

An introduction to the New Testament

Part 10 – The birth of Jesus

The birth of Jesus from the perspectives of two of the Gospel writers

Part 11 – Jesus Begins His Public Ministry

The ministry of John the Baptist, and the baptism and testing of Jesus

Part 12 – The Mission of Jesus

The reason for Jesus' coming into the world and His call to discipleship

Part 13 – The Message of Jesus

The teaching of Jesus and the way to enter the Kingdom of God

Part 14 – Responses to Jesus

The miracles and claims of Jesus and how people responded to Him

Part 15 – One Week in Jerusalem

The last week of Jesus' ministry, His death and its significance

Part 16 – Resurrection and Ascension

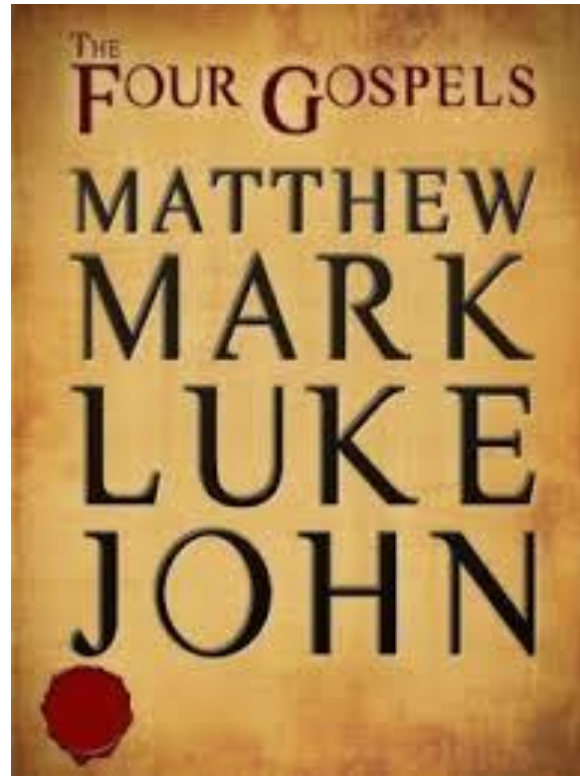
The resurrection of Jesus and His ascension to Heaven

**THE ONE THING THAT CAUSED GOD TO FINALLY SAY:
ENOUGH IS ENOUGH**

SIN

**Created 400 years of silence between God
and man!!**

The Silence is Broken



- Written over the course of almost a century after Jesus' death
- They tell the same story
- Reflect very different ideas and concerns.

Matthew –Anywhere from 50CE to 70CE...

- One of Jesus' closest followers
- The tax collector

- Wrote his Gospel to Christians from a Jewish background

- A list of Jesus' ancestors in three parts (Abraham to David, David to Exile, Exile to Jesus)
- Matt 1:1-17

- To show that Jesus was the true King of Israel descended from King David

Mark – Anywhere from 55CE to 70CE...

-Good News in Greek based his record on the account of Peter

-Wrote to Christians who were suffering for their faith

- A quotation from Isaiah about the “messenger” who would come before the Messiah, which Mark links to John the Baptist.

1 This is the Good News about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God. It began ² just as the prophet Isaiah had written: “Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, and he will prepare your way. ³ He is a voice shouting in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the LORD’s coming! Clear the road for him!’” ⁴ This messenger was John the Baptist. He was in the wilderness and preached that people should be baptized to show that they had repented of their sins and turned to God to be forgiven **-Mark 1:1-4 NLT**

-To show that Jesus was the Suffering Servant

Luke – probably written before 62CE...Paul's letters date 45CE to 58CE

- A physician who interviewed several eyewitnesses to Jesus' life. Friend of the Apostle Paul

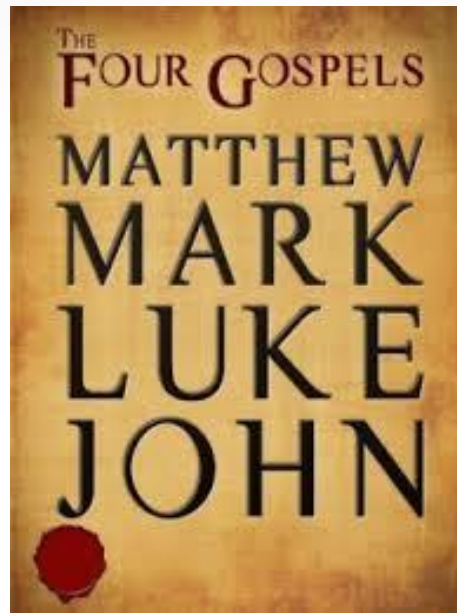
- A series of four stories before Jesus' birth putting his birth in the context of history and the Old Testament.

- To show that Jesus was a perfect sinless man

John – written between 90CE and 100CE

- One of Jesus' closest followers

- To show that Jesus was the Son of God come into the world as a human being



-First 3 are “Synoptic gospels“

-synoptic means taking the view

-The baptism of Jesus, the imprisonment and death of John the Baptist and the crucifixion of Jesus

-The Gospel of John, is called "the spiritual gospel“

-John 6 Jesus says, *"Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood you will have no life in you."*



-The Jewish people expected:

-God's Messiah soon to come to drive out the Romans and set up a new kingdom based in Jerusalem

-The Jewish leaders expected:

-A Conquering King

-What they did not expect:

-Messiah to come as a Suffering Servant

Key Questions:

- How does the New Testament follow on from the Old Testament?
- Who is Jesus?

Key Lesson: The New Testament shows that Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament

-The first four books of the New Testament tell the story of Jesus' life and teaching.

-They show that He fulfilled the promises of the Old Covenant and came to restore the Kingdom of God.



UNDERSTANDING CHRISTIANITY

**A Simplified Look at a
Complicated Belief**

Part II

The Life of Jesus

UNDERSTANDING CHRISTIANITY

Part 10 – The birth of Jesus

Luke's Perspective (Luke 2:1-52) – Jesus is born as a human baby

Luke's stories about the birth of Jesus are intended to teach us important lessons about who Jesus was and why He came:

Who is Jesus? The Messiah, the descendant of King David

- Joseph was a descendant of King David. The promised Savior for God's people must be a descendant of the line of King David.

⁶ And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. ⁷ She gave birth to her first child, a son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them.

-Luke 1:6,7 NLT

- Jesus was born in Bethlehem, even though at this time Joseph was living in Nazareth in Galilee. *² "But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, are only a small village among all the people of Judah. Yet a ruler of Israel will come from you, one whose origins are from the distant past.*

-Micah 5:2 NLT.

John's Perspective (John 1:1-18) – God becomes human in Jesus

John describes Jesus' birth in a very different way from Luke. Whereas Luke writes from a human perspective about how people saw Jesus, John writes from God's perspective. He gives us insights into both who Jesus is and why He came into the world:

-Who is Jesus...Why Jesus Came

"The Word"¹"In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God." **-John 1:1 NLT**

To make God known to people. *"¹⁸ No one has ever seen God. But the unique One, who is himself God, is near to the Father's heart. He has revealed God to us."* **-John 1:18 NLT**

To show people the glory of God. *"¹⁴ So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son."* **-John 1:14 NLT**

To reveal God's grace and truth. *"¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses, but God's unfailing love and faithfulness came through Jesus Christ."*
-John 1:17 NLT

The Word– God communicates to us

- It teaches us much about His mission.
- It emphasizes the fact that He is God's communication to us.
 - through the world He has created, through our conscience, and through the Bible.
- If we want to know what God is like we only need to look at Jesus.

The Unique One, who is Himself God.

18 No one has ever seen God. But the unique One, who is himself God, is near to the Father's heart. He has revealed God to us. -John 1:18 NLT

Many other verses in the New Testament also show that Jesus is God:

- John 10:30 – Jesus and the Father are one
- John 20:28-29 – Thomas calls Jesus “My Lord and my God!” and Jesus commends him for it
- Philippians 2:6-8 – Jesus was “in very nature God” but became human
- Colossians 1:15 – Jesus is the “image of the invisible God”
- Hebrews 1:3 – Jesus is “the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of His being”
- I John 5:20 – Jesus is “the true God and eternal life”

Jesus had a special relationship with God as His Father which was different from the normal way in which Jewish people spoke about God.

30 The Father and I are one."

-John 10:30 NLT

33 They replied, "We're stoning you not for any good work, but for blasphemy! You, a mere man, claim to be God."

-John 10:33 NLT

Confusing???

- The Bible teaches that there is only one true God,
- New Testament that there are three persons within God
- Equal in power.

Old Testament

"26 Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us.

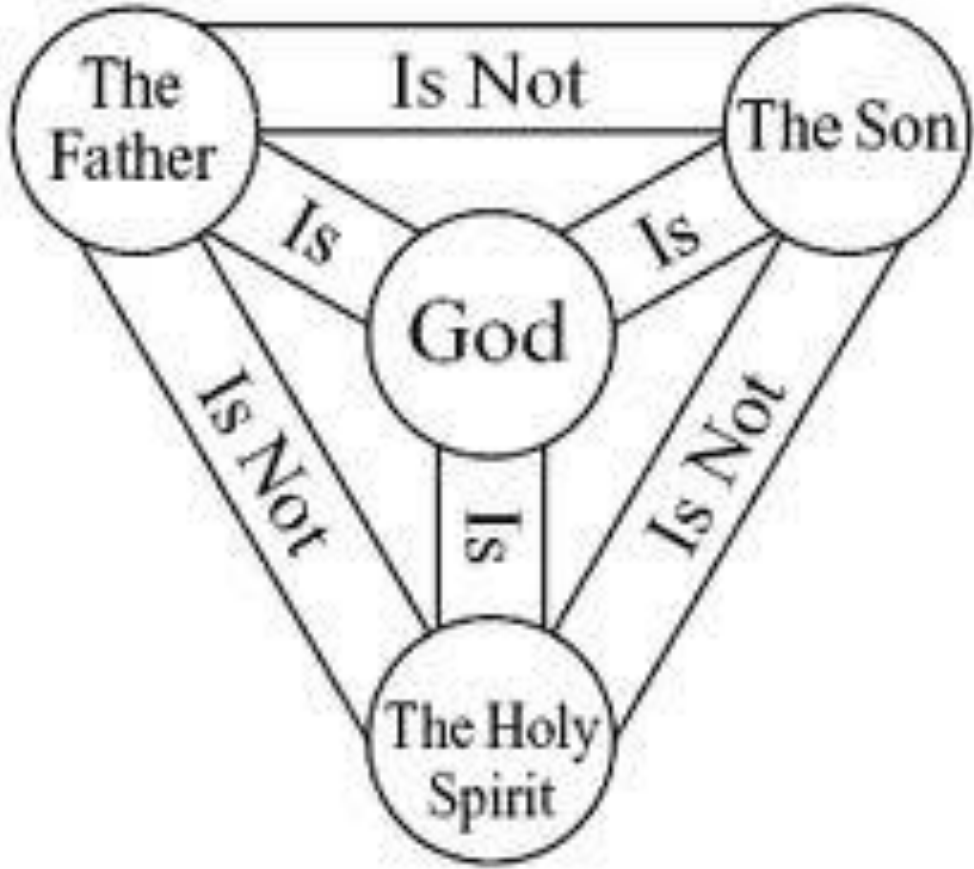
-Genesis 1:26 NLT

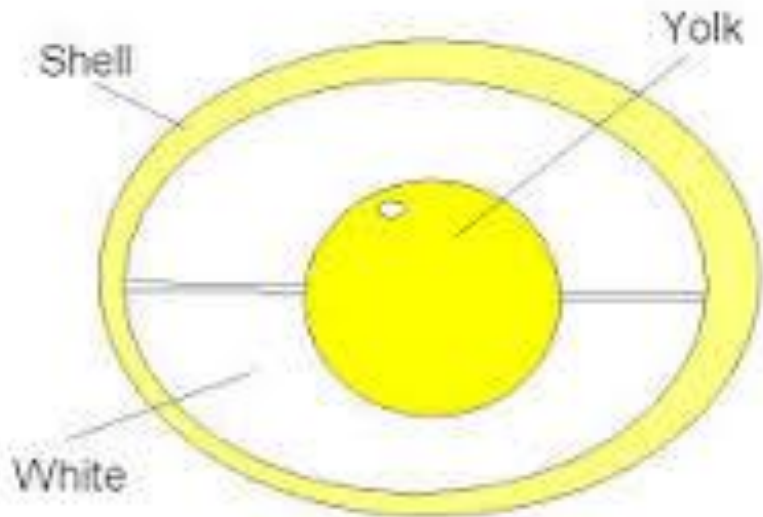
- Three persons....one purpose...always work together
- Each relate to us in different ways
- Relationship with one another.

The three are:

- 1. **Father** – often referred to simply as “God”
- 2. **Son** – the Word who became human and lived among us (verse 14), taking the name of Jesus
- 3. **Holy Spirit** – who lives in every true Christian

We must accept the Bible’s teaching that the Father, Son (Jesus) and Holy Spirit are equally God. Christians often describe this reality as the “trinity” (meaning “three in unity”), although this word is never used in the Bible.





SOLID



LIQUID

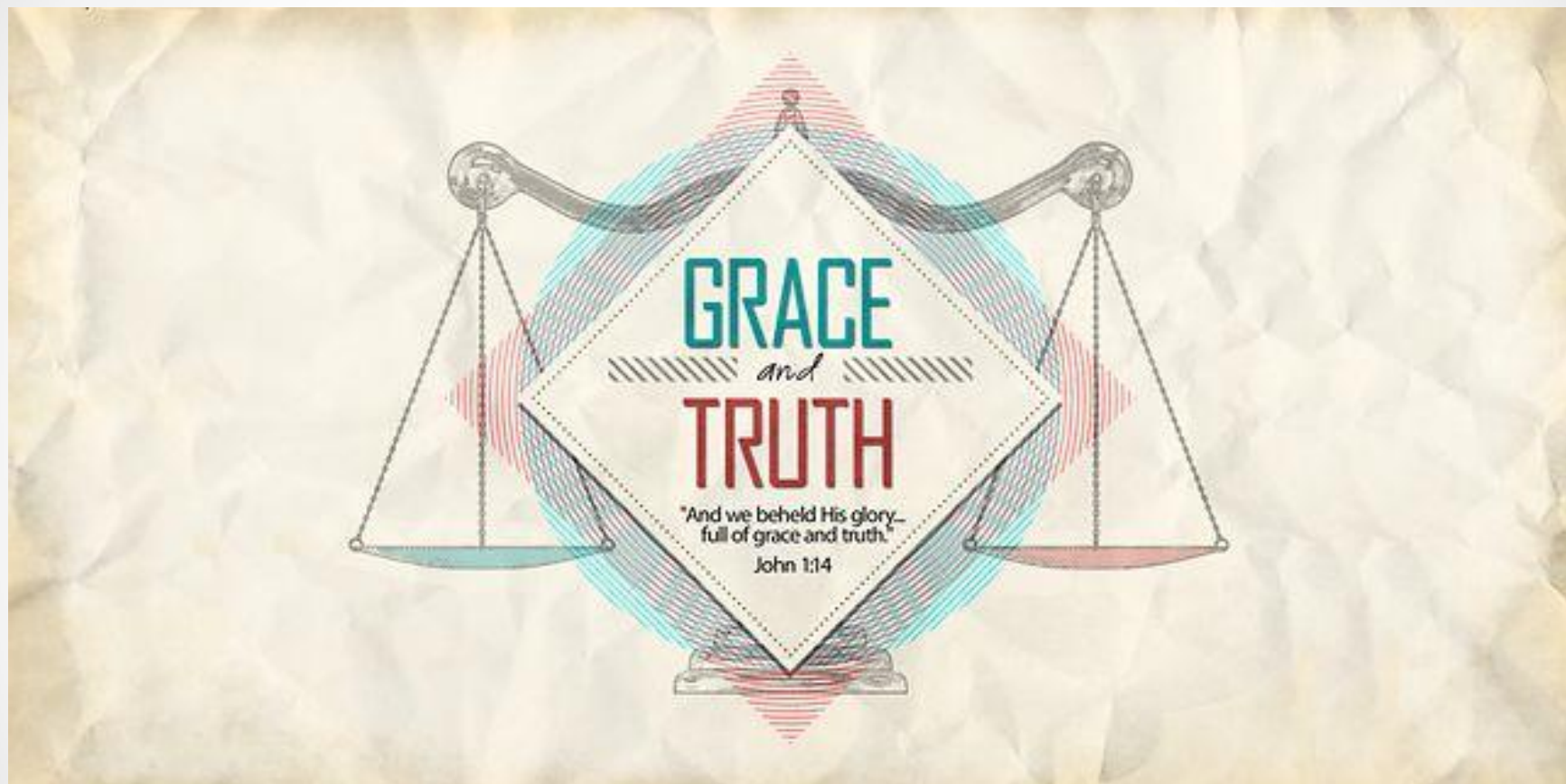


GAS

Unfailing love and faithfulness (verse 17) – God is always true and always loving

- These two words summarize Jesus', and therefore God's, character
- He is equally balanced in truth and grace
- God is always true and always right, but He is also always loving
- John could write later about Jesus:
5“there is no sin in Him” -I John 3:5 NLT
- God's truth and love...the greatest problem of the Bible
- We have sinned against God
- He still loves us and wants to forgive us

how can this be???





He died in our place, taking the punishment for our sins, so that God can remain right and uphold the truth (He has punished our sins in the death of Jesus) but also forgive and accept us.

Children of God

¹² But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. **-John 1:12-13 NLT**

God wants us to love Him to

-John says that many people rejected Jesus

¹¹ He came to his own people, and even they rejected him.

-John 1:11 NLT

-Accept Him and trust in Him

-Relationship with God. They can become God's children

-This relationship is based on faith



Clive Staples Lewis

C.S. Lewis described the foolishness of claiming Christ as nothing more than a good teacher in his book *Mere Christianity*. He wrote:

I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: “I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept his claim to be God.” That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.

Well, Jesus claimed to be God-period. He didn't leave any other option open. Truth is, his claim must either be true or false. Jesus' question to his disciples, "Who do you say I am?" (Matthew 16:15), has several alternatives.

-Was he a liar?

-If Jesus made his claims knowing he wasn't God, then he was lying to his followers. If he was a liar, he was also a hypocrite-a guy who told others to be honest even while he taught and lived a colossal lie.

That view of Jesus, however, doesn't jive with what we know of Jesus or the results of his life and teachings. Whenever Jesus has been proclaimed, lives have been changed. Nations have repented. Thieves have gone straight. Alcoholics have tossed their bottles. Hateful individuals have become channels of love. Someone whose life had results like that couldn't have been a phony.

-Was he a lunatic?

-If someone told you he was God, you would believe him about as much as if he said he was Santa Claus. You would call him one deluded and self-deceived dude. Yet Jesus didn't display the abnormalities and imbalance that usually go hand in hand with being crazy. Jesus was a guy who spoke some of the most profound words ever recorded-words that have set free many individuals, even some in mental bondage. Jesus Christ was no lunatic.

-Was he Lord?

-If Christ isn't a liar or a lunatic, you only have one option:

He is who he claimed to be-the Son of God.

Key Lesson: Jesus was both man and God and came to make it possible for us to know God

Luke and John teach us a lot about who Jesus was and why He came. He was the eternal God born as a human baby. He was both the Messiah descended from King David and the unique Son of God who had no beginning.

He came to reveal God to us and to make it possible for us to become God's children through faith in Him.



UNDERSTANDING CHRISTIANITY

**A Simplified Look at a
Complicated Belief**

Part II

The Life of Jesus

UNDERSTANDING CHRISTIANITY

Part 11 – Jesus Begins His Public Ministry

John the Baptist Prepares the way for Jesus (Luke 3:1-20)

John the Baptist was the cousin of Jesus (the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth).

-He was a remarkable person

⁴ John's clothes were woven from coarse camel hair, and he wore a leather belt around his waist. For food he ate locusts and wild honey.

-Matthew 3:4 NLT

-Lived in the desert preaching about God's kingdom and baptizing people in water.

John's Calling

John's ministry was very important in God's plan. Luke shows this in two ways:

-John's message came from God– John was a prophet just like in the Old Testament times:

² Annas and Caiaphas were the high priests. At this time a message from God came to John son of Zechariah, who was living in the wilderness.

-Luke 3:2 NLT

-John fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies of Isaiah

⁴ Isaiah had spoken of John when he said, "He is a voice shouting in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the LORD's coming! Clear the road for him!'"

-Luke 3:4 NLT

John's Message

There are several key themes in John's message:

1. Judgment

– God is going to judge people. John warned the people that they needed to be ready before the day when He does this.

⁷ When the crowds came to John for baptism, he said, "You brood of snakes! Who warned you to flee God's coming wrath?" -Luke 3:7 NLT

-Relationship...Not just because they are Jewish

⁸ Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God. Don't just say to each other, 'We're safe, for we are descendants of Abraham.' **-Luke 3:8 NLT**

-What they really needed was a personal relationship with God... they must seek Him.

2. Repentance

-John called people to repent – to turn from their sins to ask God for forgiveness

³ Then John went from place to place on both sides of the Jordan River, preaching that people should be baptized to show that they had repented of their sins and turned to God to be forgiven.

–Luke 3:3 NLT

Repentance:

-to feel such sorrow for sin or fault as to be disposed to change one's life for the better; be penitent

As a sign of their repentance, John baptized the people

-to baptize means to immerse them in water).

3. The Messiah

– People asked John if he was the Messiah God had promised, but he explained that He was not.

-John said four important things about the Messiah:

a. He is coming soon

b. He will be much greater than John

c. He will baptize “with the Holy Spirit”

d. He will judge people – He will also baptize with fire.

-In the Bible fire is a picture of judgment, and John explains that the Messiah will judge people, separating them out like grain and chaff

John's identity (John 1:19-28)

- The Jewish leaders wanted to know who John claimed he was and what right he had to baptize
- John denied that he was any of these three, but
- he did claim that he was the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy and
- he was preparing the way

John Baptizes Jesus (Matthew 3:13-17)

¹³ Then Jesus went from Galilee to the Jordan River to be baptized by John. ¹⁴ But John tried to talk him out of it. "I am the one who needs to be baptized by you," he said, "so why are you coming to me?" ¹⁵ But Jesus said, "It should be done, for we must carry out all that God requires." So John agreed to baptize him. ¹⁶ After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him. ¹⁷ And a voice from heaven said, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy."

This is another example of the three persons of God being in one place, and also tells us that Jesus was unique – the Son of God who had no sin. It was this that convinced John that Jesus really was the Messiah and the Son of God. So, Jesus' baptism:

1. Identified Jesus with John's ministry – Jesus would continue on from John
2. Proved (to John) that Jesus was God's sinless Son
3. Marked the beginning of Jesus' public ministry – it introduced Him to the people

John Points People to Follow Jesus (John 1:29-34)

This event happened after Jesus was baptized by John (possibly the following day). John spoke out about Jesus and told the people that:

- (i) Jesus is far greater than John because He existed long before him

- (ii) Jesus was the one John was waiting for – this was revealed to John by God Himself when He spoke from Heaven at Jesus' baptism.

- (iii) Jesus is the Son of God

- (iv) Jesus is the “Lamb of God”, who takes away the sin of the world– this is a prophecy about why Jesus came to earth. In the Old Testament system of sacrifices a lamb was killed by the priest as a sacrifice for the sin of the people. John is predicting that Jesus will die as a sacrifice for the sin of the whole world! The people (and most probably John himself) did not understand this at the time.

John gives way to Jesus (John 3:22-36)

-After Jesus was baptized by John

-John's followers were confused and disappointed

-John knew that he had done the work that God had given him to do –to prepare the way for the Messiah

27 John replied, "No one can receive anything unless God gives it from heaven. 28 You yourselves know how plainly I told you, 'I am not the Messiah. I am only here to prepare the way for him.' 29 It is the bridegroom who marries the bride, and the best man is simply glad to stand with him and hear his vows. Therefore, I am filled with joy at his success. **-John 3:37-29 NLT**

30 He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less.31 "He has come from above and is greater than anyone else. We are of the earth, and we speak of earthly things, but he has come from heaven and is greater than anyone else.32 He testifies about what he has seen and heard, but how few believe what he tells them!33 Anyone who accepts his testimony can affirm that God is true. 34 For he is sent by God. He speaks God's words, for God gives him the Spirit without limit. **-John 3:30-34 NLT**

UNDERSTANDING CHRISTIANITY

**A Simplified Look at a
Complicated Belief**

Part II

The Life of Jesus



Jesus is Tested and Found to be Sinless (Luke 4:1-13)

-He went into the desert for 40 days

In the case of Jesus, Satan attacked Him in three ways:

1. To turn a stone into bread –

-Satan chose this temptation at a time when Jesus was hungry.

Jesus answered with a quote from the Old Testament

*...”people do not live by bread alone; rather, we live by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.” - **Deuteronomy 8:3 NLT***

2. To worship Satan in return for all the kingdoms of earth

Jesus again quoted the Old Testament

¹³ You must fear the LORD your God and serve him. When you take an oath, you must use only his name. **-Deuteronomy 6:13 NLT**

3. To jump off the Temple

Satan quoted from the Old Testament himself,

*¹¹ For he will order his angel to protect you wherever you go.
¹² They will hold you up with their hands so you won't even hurt your foot on a stone.* **-Psalm 91:11-12 NLT**

Jesus, however, refused, quoting an Old Testament

¹⁶ You must not test the LORD your God ... **-Deuteronomy 6:16 NLT**

These temptations cover three major areas of sin for human beings:

1. Selfishness – Jesus refused to perform a miracle to fulfill His own needs. He was able to control his natural desires (in this case hunger) and do what was right at all times

2. Greed – Jesus refused to take all the power and riches the world can offer. He recognized that man's first responsibility is to worship God and honor Him.

3. Pride – Jesus refused to test God by acting in a proud way

-we should trust God, not test Him. Trusting God does not mean demanding that He does what we want but surrendering to Him and obeying what He wants

The very center of sin:

-The rejection of God as our King

Jesus claim that He was completely sinless is vital to understanding His mission

-If He was not sinless:

-He could not be the perfect sacrifice for sins

-His claims to be God were false

-Because He did not sin, He must be God, and His death is able to be the one sacrifice for our sins forever

Key Questions:

- How did Jesus begin His public ministry?
- How did people know He was really from God?

Key Lesson: Jesus was the sinless Son of God come to restore God's Kingdom

-John was the last and greatest prophet pointing forward to the Messiah

-He handed on his ministry to Jesus, telling people that He was the Messiah, the Son of God and the Lamb of God

-Jesus was tested by Satan in the desert and proved to be completely sinless

-Jesus was unique among human beings. We are sinners – He is the sinless Savior



UNDERSTANDING CHRISTIANITY

**A Simplified Look at a
Complicated Belief**

Part II

The Life of Jesus

UNDERSTANDING CHRISTIANITY

Part 12 – The Mission of Jesus

Jesus' three years of public ministry

-Jesus' ministry began around 29CE

-He died around three and a half years later in 33CE

The three years of Jesus' public ministry represent three different stages in the response of the people to Him:

1. Year 1 (beginnings)

-His ministry opened with a dramatic statement:

“The Kingdom of God is near. Repent of your sins and believe the good news!” **-Mark 1:15 NLT**

This was Jesus’ mission

2. Year 2 (popularity)

-Jesus became very popular because of His teaching and miracles

3. Year 3 (rejection)

-Jewish leaders began to oppose Jesus more openly

-People left Him because they couldn’t understand His teachings

-He didn’t act in the way they expected the Messiah to act

Jesus Chooses His Twelve Apostles (Luke 6:12-16)

-Jesus had many disciples, but He chose twelve to be His closest followers. He gave them the special designation “apostles”, a word which means that they were sent into the world as His special representatives.



1. Simon Peter –

-Simon was a fisherman for whom Jesus invented the new name “Peter”. He was the leader of the twelve. He wrote two books in the New Testament (I and II Peter), and Mark’s gospel is a record of the things he remembered about Jesus.

2. Andrew –

-Brother of Peter, and also a fisherman. Andrew is best remembered for bringing people to Jesus, including his brother Peter.

3. James –

-Brother of John, also a fisherman. James and John both worked in Peter’s family business. Luke 5:10 and Matthew 4:21-22 tell us how Jesus called James and John. They were also known as the Sons of Thunder

4. John –

-Wrote five books in the New Testament, John’s gospel, I, II & III John and Revelation

5. Matthew –

the author of Matthew's Gospel. Matthew (also called Levi) was a tax collector working for the Romans.

6. Philip –

Philip the Apostle was one of the earliest followers of Jesus Christ. Some scholars speculate that Philip was first a disciple of John the Baptist, because he lived in the region where John preached. Philip was a Galilean, from the village of Bethsaida.

7. Thomas –

also called Didymus. Thomas is most famous for doubting that Jesus had been raised from the dead until he actually saw Him

8. Simon the Zealot –

the Zealots were a radical Jewish group who strongly opposed Roman rule

9. Judas Iscariot –

this disciple betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. It seems that he was never really a genuine follower of Jesus

10. Bartholomew 11. James, the son of Alphaeus 12. Judas the son of James

political radicals, hated tax collectors, unknown people, at least four fishermen, and even one traitor

In choosing these men Jesus showed that He had a unique knowledge of the hearts of people and that He had come to call all kinds of people



UNDERSTANDING CHRISTIANITY

**A Simplified Look at a
Complicated Belief**

Part II

The Life of Jesus

Jesus' Mission – why did He come into the World?

Why did Jesus come into the world? He gave at least five answers to this question, all of them recorded in John's gospel:

1. ***“To do the will of God who sent me”*** (John 6:38) – Jesus taught that He was the special messenger of God who always obeyed what the Father said
2. ***“I came to bring truth to the world”*** (John 18:37) – Jesus claimed that He was speaking God's truth, and that those who love truth would recognize it
3. ***“I have come to judge the world ... to give sight to the blind and to show those who think they can see that they are blind”*** (John 9:39) – Jesus challenged people to realize that they were spiritually blind, meaning that they did not know God.

4. ***“I have come as a light to shine in this dark world so that all who put their trust in me will no longer remain in the darkness”*** (John 12:46) – Jesus claimed that this world is in darkness because of sin, and that He had come to shine His light (knowledge about God) into the world.

5. ***“My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.”*** (John 10:10)
Jesus claimed that His followers could have a different quality of life from the normal

-The Bible claims that a life without God is incomplete, but that when we come to know God through Jesus we can have a life that is full of peace, joy and contentment

Eternal Life – God’s gift given through Jesus

John:3

Nicodemus...was a respected teacher of the people. He was a Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin.

Nicodemus recognized that Jesus came from God because of the miracles He performed. Jesus’ told Nicodemus that if he wanted to see God’s Kingdom he must have a new birth – not a physical birth, but a spiritual one. In other words, Jesus told this leading Jewish teacher that he was not even alive spiritually!

We all begin life far from God (not in His Kingdom) and so spiritually dead. We enter into a relationship with God (enter into His Kingdom) by being born again with a new kind of life which is:

- 1. Spiritual, not physical (verse 5)**

- 2. Given to people by the Holy Spirit (verse 6)**

- 3. Eternal (verse 15)** (“eternal” means it can never end). This life carries on after the body has died.

- 4. Received through faith in Jesus (verse 15)** – by trusting in Him to save and lead you

- 5. Available because of Jesus’ death (verse 14)** – when Jesus spoke of being lifted up He was speaking about His death on the cross

In verses 16-21, John comments on these words of Jesus, and shows us that there are two groups of people:

a) People who trust in Jesus –

These people have eternal life and will not be condemned. They will be saved because they have trusted in Jesus. God wants all people to be in this group, because He loves them

b) People who have not trusted Him –

These people have already been judged (verse 18) because they preferred to sin in the darkness than to come to the light of God (verse 20). John's summary of Jesus' mission in verses 16-17 are possibly the most famous words in the Bible:

¹⁶ "For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

¹⁷ God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through Him

Man is just not an imperfect creature in need of improvement...We are rebels who need to lay down our arms and surrender

We have dug ourselves into this huge hole through sin and the only way out of that hole is by admitting we have been on the wrong track, saying we are sorry for acting this way and begin all over again from the ground floor up

Repentance...is the activity of reviewing ones actions and feeling contrition or regret for past wrongs. It generally involves a commitment to personal change and resolving to live a more responsible and humane life

This struggle of going back to zero and beginning all over again is humiliating to some of us

It is more than just eating humble pie. It means unlearning al the self-conceit we have been teaching ourselves for thousands of years

It means undergoing a kind of death. It means tearing out the old way of thinking and beginning with a new mindset and a new heart

It takes a bad person to repent!!!

The worse you are the more you need it and the harder it is to repent.

-Dying daily is necessary for all of us

If we ask God to “take us back” without repenting, we are asking Him to let us go back without going back!!

Sooo...how does God help us come back???

-God puts a little bit of His love in each person who accepts Him

-This love in our heart makes us want to love others

Many times that love comes out but sometimes it does not. If we never fell, it would be smooth sailing. But we fall and we are asking God to help us with something He has never done...

Are the following statements fair to say:

Only a perfect person can repent perfectly...

That perfect person would not need repentance...

God has never fallen...

So how can someone who is perfect and has never fallen help us???

The one road we need to have help going down...God has never gone down..

-God is Spiritual and we are human so how can He help us???

WHAT IF....

God became a human???

-What if our human nature, which can suffer and hurt were united with God's nature??

-That person could help us, right??

-He could suffer and die for us...and do it perfectly

-He could bear the penalty...pay the debt...foot the bill for us

We cannot share God's dying unless He dies and He cannot die unless He becomes human...

-That is the sense in which He pays our debt or foots out bill..

**-This is the bottom line of
Christianity**

Key Lesson: Jesus called people to surrender everything to receive eternal life from Him

Jesus called people to follow Him, and to do this they had to surrender everything else and accept His rule over their lives.

In exchange He offered them eternal life, life in all its fullness, which is received through faith in Him.

**FAITH IS NOT KNOWING
WHAT THE FUTURE
HOLDS BUT KNOWING
WHO HOLDS THE FUTURE.**



Understanding Christianity

Baptism in the Holy Spirit

Baptism of the Holy Spirit is a term used to describe a movement of the Spirit upon and/or within a believer usually sometime after the person is saved. There is controversy surrounding this phenomenon as to whether it is legitimate or not. Some people believe that once a person is saved the Holy Spirit is in the person and there is no subsequent "baptism in the Holy Spirit." In other words, they maintain that this Baptism of the Spirit occurs at salvation. Others believe that it is possible for the Christian to experience an additional movement of the Holy Spirit sometime after salvation.

We need to know first that all Christians receive the Spirit upon their conversion and in this sense all Christians have been baptized in the Holy Spirit. This means that they are saved and that they have all they need at that time to be able to live godly and holy lives. 1 Cor. 12:13 says, "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit."

However, there are many Christians who claim to have had this "secondary" experience of the Spirit. They say that it has brought great blessing and comfort to them. Furthermore, they say that the results of the experience is a renewed dedication and appreciation for God, a stronger desire to read the Bible, a stronger desire to fellowship with Christians, and a deeper sense of worship of God. Millions of Christians who claim to have had this experience forces us to deal with the issue. Is it real or not? The term "baptize with the Holy Spirit" occurs several times in scripture:

Matt. 3:11, "As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."

Mark 1:8, "I baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."•

Luke 3:16, "John answered and said to them all, 'As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."

John 1:33, "And I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, "He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the one who baptizes in the Holy Spirit."

Acts 1:5, "for John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

Acts 11:16, "And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, 'John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'" We can clearly see that the phrase is used in the Bible. But, we do not find a clear teaching in the Bible of what the phrase means. Nevertheless, we can conclude that when a person is baptized in the Holy Spirit he has power bestowed upon him. This power is for the purpose of the preaching of the gospel (Acts 4:31), living a purer life, and having a deeper devotion to God. Also, it is frequently accompanied by speaking in tongues.

Acts 2:4, "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance." At this point, I would recommend the reader to examine Acts 1-2 to see the movement of the Holy Spirit upon the early church at Pentecost. The issue now seems to be whether or not Baptism of/in/with the Holy Spirit is a subsequent event occurring after salvation. It would seem that this is the case.

In John 20:22, Jesus commanded that the disciples receive the Holy Spirit, "And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit." This means that they were saved since the Holy Spirit is not received by the unregenerate.

Then, later in Acts 1:4-5 we read, "And gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; ⁵ for John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."•

The danger of this phenomena is the potential division of the body of Christ into two categories: those who are "regular" Christians and those who have been baptized in the Holy Spirit. This, of course, would be an incorrect way of looking at Christians, and this is why. If you were to step outside into a soft mist, it would take a long time to get completely wet. On the other hand, if you were to step into a torrential rain, you'd be drenched quickly.

Lesson:

Those who have not experienced the Baptism of the Holy Spirit (meaning a sudden and powerful experience) are not second-class citizens by any means.

They are the ones in the gentle mist who experience the Lord over a long period of time and get just as blessed as those who suddenly step into the torrent of the Spirit's



UNDERSTANDING CHRISTIANITY

WATER BAPTISM

Baptism is taught clearly in Scripture and since the Scriptures are the best and most obvious authority on any issue, especially this one, let's use them for our guide on this issue as well.

I. THE MANDATE OF WATER BAPTISM

A. As you read the New Testament, water baptism is an obvious mandate.

1. "Mandate" – "an order or command"
2. A command is something that must be followed

B. Let's look at what the Scriptures have to say concerning baptism:

1. Matthew 28:18 – 19 – "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 19Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

a. The One who has all authority gives the command for the church to practice this ordinance of baptism.

b. Water baptism was obviously part of the process of becoming a follower of Jesus.

2. Jesus Himself was baptized when He began the actual ministry part of His life. In Matthew 3:13-15, Jesus came from Galilee to be baptized by John. When John said he was not worthy enough to baptize Jesus and that Jesus should be baptizing him – "Jesus replied, 'Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.'" Literally, Jesus was saying that He was doing it because it was what was right to do.

C. A command is something that requires obedience.

1. Early Christians called baptism a sacramentum (sacrament) – the Latin word for the soldier's oath of absolute devotion, allegiance, and obedience to his commander.

2. Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote: "He who believes, obeys; and he who obeys, believes."

3. If you say Jesus is your Lord and Savior but say you don't need to be baptized, it puts you in a very precarious position.

II. THE METHOD OF WATER BAPTISM

A. The method of baptism is one of the most argued points concerning this subject. The Bible clearly describes the baptismal process so let's see what it has to say concerning the method of baptism:

1. Baptism requires water. Anytime someone is baptized in the New Testament it is with water.

2. Baptism requires plenty of water.

a. John 3:23 – "John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized."

3. Baptism requires going down into water.

a. Acts 8:38 – "And the eunuch commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him."

4. Baptism requires coming up out of water.

a. Acts 8:39a – "And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing."

b. Matthew 3:16a – "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:"

III. THE MEANING OF WATER BAPTISM

A. The meaning of baptism is this: It is the complete surrender of everything you are and everything you have to follow Jesus Christ and be obedient to Him. Having said that what does that mean exactly?:

1. Baptism identifies us with the death and resurrection of Jesus.

a. Baptism isn't just some magical, mystical act. The water isn't magical. The pronouncement of "...in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit..." isn't magical. And the person performing the baptism is not magical.

b. Through baptism we identify with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus and is what makes baptism effective.

c. Tom Ellsworth tells a story about a Christian who went on a tour of the Holy Land. When they got to the traditional site of Calvary, the tour guide explained what had happened during Jesus' crucifixion. He asked, "Has any of you been here before?" This Christian raised his hand and responded, "I have." The guide asked, "You have? When were you here?" The Christian replied, "About 2,000 years ago."

2. Baptism signifies your commitment to Jesus Christ as both Savior and Lord.

a. William James: "An impression without expression leads to depression."

b. When something makes a big impact on you, it needs to find an outward expression or you begin to feel frustrated.

c. God created us in such a way that almost every emotion has an appropriate outlet. You show sadness by crying; you show fear by screaming; you show hilarity by laughing out loud; you show gratitude by giving; you show love with a passionate embrace.

d. What do you do when you are impressed with Jesus Christ? When you grasp the reality of His love and you want to receive His grace, He's provided baptism as a means of expressing your faith.

3. Baptism signifies the cleansing that we have experienced through the washing of the blood of Jesus Christ.

a. Baptism provides an outward expression of the inward cleansing and renewal that we have experienced. It is an opportunity to begin with a new slate and to begin fresh and have a new start.

b. Many religions acknowledge the need for cleansing from sin. However, no matter how much we try, we cannot erase the wretched memory of our sins.

c. Only One Person can remove our sins from us!

1. Hebrews 9:22 – "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission."

2. Ephesians 1:7 – "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."

Key Lesson:

Baptism signifies the offering of our lives in service to Jesus Christ.

a. Jesus' baptism signified the beginning of his ministry. Thus for us water baptism is a testimony that we are offering our lives in service to the Lord Jesus Christ. When you're saved you're not saved to sit, you're saved to serve.

b. Baptism is not effective because you got wet. It's effective because it's part of the process of pledging your unending devotion to Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior

