

THE WORK OF CHRIST

“the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow”

Key question

What did Christ come to do on earth?

Key text

Philippians 2:6-11

“who (Christ Jesus), although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondservant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue would confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Key Definition

The ministry of Christ

Christ existed eternally to glorify the Father by creating, redeeming, and ruling over those who are a part of His church in this age and all creation in the age to come.

Introduction

1. It is interesting to note that the ancient creeds of the Christian faith say nothing about the teaching and miracles of Jesus but rather focus attention on three things.
 - a. The Incarnation
 - b. The Passion and Death
 - c. The Resurrection
2. The church fathers believed that this threefold emphasis corresponds to man’s threefold alienation from God.
 - a. Man is alien to God by reason of **creation**. He is a creature with a body and not just a spirit. Jn.1:14; Col.2:9
 - b. Man is alien to God by reason of **sin**. Rom.5:10,19; Matt.26:28; Mk.14:24; Heb.9:22; Eph.1:7; I Pet.2:24

- c. Man is alien to God by reason of **death**. Rom.4:25; 5:12,14,17,21; 6:21,23; 2,6,38; I Cor.15:26

A. **His humiliation (“the suffering of Christ” I Pet.1:11) - His Incarnation (suffering the wrath of man)** Being “numbered with the transgressors” Isa.53:11

1. **The historical integrity of the life of Christ**

a. **Documentary evidence**

1. **The Christian testimony**

- a. The Gospels are accurate descriptions of selected portions of Jesus’ life and work (Lk.1:1-4; Jn.21:25).
- b. The Epistles related in more detail the implications of Jesus’ teaching and life (Jn.14:25-26).
- c. The pseudepigrapha (Christian writings that were not included in the canon or Scripture) bear witness to Christ. (**See notes on Inspiration (Text) #209**)
 1. **THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS** (collection of 114 sayings attributed to Jesus) It has a strong Gnostic flavor and was written to justify a sect. Didymus JudasThomas (the twin) may have been Jesus’ half brother (Mk.6:3).
 2. **THE INFANCY GOSPEL OF THOMAS** (stories of Jesus youth beginning at age five)
 3. **THE GOSPEL OF PETER** (Jesus felt no pain when crucified and Mary remained a virgin)
 4. **PROTEVANGELIUM OF JAMES** (devotion to Mary)
 5. **THE GOSPEL OF THE HEBREWS** (gnostic reference to the Holy Spirit as our mother)
 6. **THE GOSPEL OF THE EGYPTIANS** (gnostic)
 7. **THE GOSPEL OF THE NAZARAEANS** (like the synoptics)
 8. **THE GOSPEL OF PHILIP** (gnostic) It suggests that Jesus and Mary had a romantic relationship.
 9. **THE BOOK OF THOMAS THE ATHLETE** (gnostic)
 10. **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATHIAS** (gnostic)
 11. **THE GOSPEL OF JUDAS** (gnostic)
 12. **EPISTLE OF AN APOSTLE** (dialogue between Christ and the disciples after the resurrection)
 13. **APOCRYPHON OF JOHN** (dialogue between the disciples and the Revealer)
 14. **THE GOSPEL OF TRUTH** (gnostic)
 15. **THE GOSPEL OF THE EDIONITES** (Jesus was not God until His baptism)

2. **The Jewish testimony**

- a. The **Babylonian Talmud** (Sanhedrin 43a)

“On the eve of the Passover, Jesus of Nazareth was hung. During forty days a herald went before him crying aloud: ‘He ought to be stoned because he has practiced magic, has led Israel astray and caused them to rise in rebellion. Let him who has something to say in his defense come forward and declare it.’ But no one came forward, and he was hung on the eve of the Passover.”
- b. **Josephus** (Antiquities, xviii, 3, 3)

“And there arose about this time Jesus, a wise man, if indeed we should call him a man. For he was a doer of marvelous deeds (miracles), a teacher of men who receive the truth with pleasure. He led away many Jews, and also many of the Greeks. This man was the Christ. And when Pilate had condemned him to the cross on his impeachment by the chief men among us, those who loved him at first did not cease; for he appeared to them on the third day alive again, the divine prophets having spoken these and thousands of other wonderful things about him; and even now the tribe of Christians, so named after him, has not yet died out.”

- c. The Old Testament prophecies concerning Jesus. (See chart on “**Messianic Prophecies Fulfilled**” under “**The Hypostatic Union of Christ**” #508.)

3. The Roman testimony

- a. **Pliny the Younger** (Governor of Bithynia)

He wrote to Emperor Trojan seeking guidance in the matter of dealing with Christians, whom he describes as coming together at fixed seasons and singing a hymn to Christ as God.

- b. **Tacitus** (Annals, xv, 44)

“Christus . . . had undergone the death penalty in the reign of Tiberius, by sentence of the Procurator Pontius Pilate, and the pernicious superstition was checked for a moment, only to break out once more, not merely in Judaea, the home of the disease, but in the capital itself, where all things horrible or shameful in the world collect and find a vogue.”

- c. **Suetonius** (Life of Claudius, xxv, 4)

He stated that the Emperor Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome because of their tumults at the instigation of Christus.

b. The Institutional Evidence of the life of Christ.

The fact that the Christian Church exists is a witness to the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

c. Christian Experience

1. Christians throughout history have given testimony to the personal indwelling presence of the living Christ.
2. The work and lives of Christians are sighted as evidence of Christ’s presence.

2. The relationship of Jesus to the Old Covenant

a. **Jn.1:29-34**

1. “The lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” (He related to the sacrificial system of the Old Covenant - Isaiah 53:7; I Cor.5:7).
2. “This is the one who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.” (He brought the “promise of the Father” - Ezekiel 36:26-27; Luke 24:49).

b. **Matt.5:17-20**

1. “I did not come to abolish the law . . . but to fulfill”
 - a. In His sinless life (Heb.4:15; 7:26)
 - b. In His exposition of the Law (Matt.5-7)
 - c. In His atoning death (Col.2:14; Eph.2:15)
2. “Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees . . .”

- c. **Matt.27:50-54** - “The curtain of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom.”
 - d. **Gal.4:4-5**
 - 1. “But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law,”
 - 2. Jesus lived his life as a Jew under the prescriptions of the Old Covenant.
3. **The relationship of Jesus to the New Covenant**
- **Lk.22:20** - “his cup . . . is the new covenant in my blood”
 - **I Cor.5:7** - “Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed . . .”
 - **Heb.8:6-7** - “He is also the Mediator of a better covenant . . .”
 - **Gal.3:23-29** - “We are no longer under a tutor . . .”
4. **The teaching of Jesus**
- a. “Never man spake like this man”
 - 1. The Father’s testimony - **Matt. 17:5** - “This is my Son . . . hear Him.”
 - 2. Jesus’ testimony concerning His own teaching.
 - 3. **Matt. 24:35** - “My words shall not pass away.”
 - 4. **John 14:10 (5:19)** - “I do not speak on my own initiative . . .”
 - 5. The testimony of those who heard Jesus - Matt. 7:28; Mark 10:24; 12:37; Luke 4:22; 5:1,15; 6:17; 15:1; 21:38; 24:19; John 3:2; 7:46
 - b. His public work falls into four categories:
 - 1. **Preaching** - proclamation of the Gospel
 - 2. **Teaching** - exposition of the Gospel
 - 3. **Miracles** - authentication of the Gospel
 - 4. **Healing** - illustration of the Gospel
 - c. The nature of Jesus’ teaching
 - 1. His teaching seemed to be occasional (not systematic or structured) and characterized by WISDOM, AUTHORITY, SIMPLICITY, PRACTICALITY.
 - 2. Jesus’ most popular methods seem to include QUESTIONS, PARABLES, EPIGRAMS, and DISCOURSES.
 - d. The purpose of Jesus’ miracles
 - 1. **Revelation**
 - a. To show divine credentials for Jesus, and thus authenticate His message (Jn.5:36. See also Jn.20:30-31).
 - b. To symbolize His spiritual and saving work (Lk.5:23).
 - c. To attract a listening audience (Jn.12:9).
 - 2. **Edification**
 - a. To pour out upon people a measure of the divine fullness (Lk.8:46).
 - b. To help people in their physical and mental needs (Mk.1:41).
5. **The official offices of the nation Israel under the Old Covenant revealed man’s deepest longings.**

Prophet	Priest	King
To teach	To sacrifice	To empower
Christ preaches	Christ atones	Christ governs
Pedagogy	Expiation	Guidance and protection
Earthly ministry	Dying ministry	Glorified ministry
Messianic beginning	Messianic act par excellence	Messianic consummation
Mosaic type	Aaronic type	Davidic type
The Rabbi	The Lamb	The end-time Governor
God revealed	Humanity redeemed	Redemption applied

- a. **PROPHET** - someone to REVEAL truth to creatures lost and confused by the darkness of a world under sin.

Prov.29:18 “Where there is no vision (revelation) the people perish”

MOSES was a typical prophetic figure.

- b. **PRIEST** - someone to REPRESENT or REDEEM man in his moral guilt and shame.

Isa.59:2 “Your sins have been a barrier between you and your God.”

AARON was a typical priestly figure.

- c. **POTENTATE** (king) - someone to RULE or guide mankind through life.

Mk.6:34 “they were like sheep without a shepherd”

DAVID was a typical kingly figure.

Note: We are used to viewing leaders as public servants who exist at the bidding of our self-interests. Jesus as a Servant King which means that we exist for Him not He for us even though His love for us leads to the ultimate gift of His grace.

6. **Jesus’ ministry can be viewed under these three headings.**

- a. **IMMANUEL** (God with us) - **PROPHET** (REVEALING) -

1. **Christ was the Spirit of the Old Testament prophets.**

I Pet.1:10-11 “the prophets ... seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.”

2. **Christ functioned as a prophet during His earthly ministry.**

- **Heb.1:1-3a** “God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son,”
- **Acts 3:22** “The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet from your brethren as he raised me up”
- **Lk.2:32** “a light to the Gentiles and the glory of ... Israel”
- **Matt.21:11** “This is the prophet Jesus of Nazareth of Galilee”
- **Lk.24:19** “a prophet mighty in deed and word”
- **Jn.6:14** The people spoke of Jesus as "the prophet”
- **Jn.1:18** “No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known”
- **Jn.14:9** “he who has seen Me has seen the Father”

3. **Christ continued to function as a prophet through His Spirit in the church.**

Jn.16:13 “But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth;”

4. **Christ will, at His second coming (revelation) reveal everything fully -**

I Cor.13:12, I Jn.3:2

b. **JESUS** (Yahweh is salvation) - **PRIEST** (RECONCILING) - **Heb.1:3b** “When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high...”

1. **INTERCESSION -**

Jn.17 (during his earthly ministry)

Rom.8:34 (presently at the right hand of God) - **Heb.7:25, 9:24**

2. **EMPATHY -**

Heb. 2:9,18 “For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.”

3. **RECONCILIATION - (see notes on ATONEMENT)**

Heb.2:9,14,15 “He might taste death for every one”

Mk.10:45 “The Son of man came to give His life a ransom for many”

Gal.4:4-5 “when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His son, ... in order that He might redeem those who were under the law”

c. **CHRIST** (the anointed) - **POTENTATE** (RULING) -

1. **Heb.1:8** “But of the Son He says, 'Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the righteous scepter is the scepter of His kingdom.’”

2. **THE MYSTERY FORM OF HIS KINGDOM -**

a. Christ is ruling in the present.

b. **Col.1:18** “He is also head of the body, the church;”

3. **THE MILLENIAL FORM OF HIS KINGDOM -**

a. Christ will rule in the future.

b. **Matt.19:28** “Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones,”

7. **Jesus was the model of the new Adam or the perfect human.**

a. His character, values, view of life, and style of relating set a standard for all humans.

b. His unique calling as redeemer, Lord overlays his basic person, the prototype for every person living in a fallen world. His resurrected body shows us what we can expect in the next life.

B. His humiliation (“the suffering of Christ” I Pet.1:11) - His Death (suffering the wrath of God)

1. The major events in the life of Jesus -

PREPARATION

1. Birth

2. Flight to Egypt

3. Visit to the Temple

OPENING EVENTS

4. John the Baptist

5. Jesus' baptism

6. Tempted by Satan

EARLY PEREAN

7. Changes water to wine

EARLY JUDEAN

8. Nicodemus

EARLY SAMARITAN

9. The woman at the well

GALILEAN

10. Chooses the 12

11. Sermon on the Mount

12. His power is ascribed to Satan

13. Feeds 5000

14. Jesus walks on water

15. Transfiguration

LATER SAMARITAN

16. Peter wants fire to consume those who reject Jesus.

LATER JUDEAN

17. The adulterous woman

18. Feast of Tabernacles - "light of the world"

19. The 70 sent out

LATER PEREAN

20. Lazarus

21. Rich Young Ruler

22. Zaccheus

CLOSING EVENTS

23. Triumphal Entry

24. The Olivet Discourse

25. The Last Supper

26. The Farewell Discourses

27. Crucifixion

28. Resurrection

CONFIRMATION

29. Appeared to witnesses

30. Ascended to the Father

2. The Crucifixion -

- a. The Romans perfected crucifixion as a means of torture. They copied it from the Greeks who learned it from the Persians.
- b. While there have been other creative methods of torture like "drawing and quartering" there has been nothing known to man that combined social humiliation, prolonged physical pain, and emotional spiritual anguish like crucifixion.
 1. After being sentenced, the condemned person was flogged with a leather whip loaded with metal or bone.
 2. He was then required to shoulder the cross beam (about 30 lbs.) and carry it to the place of execution.
 3. This beam was affixed to the upright stake, which was already in place at the execution site.
 4. Nails about seven inches long with a head (to keep the body from sliding off) were driven through the hands and feet of the victim. Sometimes ropes were also used to keep the body on the cross.
 5. The Romans had learned to push the feet upward when they nailed them to the cross so that the victim could lean on the nail and push himself upward momentarily in order to breathe easier.

6. Death rarely came in less than three days. Insatiable thirst, pain from scourging, cramps, dizziness, public shame, and the horror of knowing what lay ahead before the release of death, all combined to make crucifixion special.

c. A calendar of the events of the last days of Jesus' life.

	Fri. pm	
Jesus arrives at Bethany		(Jn.11:55-12:11)
	Sun.	
Triumphal entry		(Matt.21:1-17)
	Mon.	
The fig tree cursed, the temple cleansed		(Matt.21:18-19)
Jesus' discourse on life and death		(Jn.12:20-50)
	Tues. am	
The fig tree found dead		(Mtt.21:19-22)
	<i>(N THE TEMPLE COURT)</i>	
The Rulers vs. Jesus		(Mtt.21:23-22:14)
The Pharisees & Herodians vs. Jesus		(Matt.22:15-22)
The Sadducees vs. Jesus		(Matt.22:23-33)
A Lawyer vs. Jesus		(Matt.22:34-40)
Jesus silences His enemies		(Matt.22:41-46)
Jesus exposes His enemies		(Matt.23:1-39)
	Tues. pm	
JESUS' DISCOURSE ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES		(Matt.24-25)
	<i>(IN BETHANY)</i>	
Jesus predicts His crucifixion		(Matt.26:1-5)
Mary anoints Jesus for His crucifixion		(Matt.26:6-13)
Judas bargains with the rulers		(Matt.26:14-16)
	Thur. pm	
	<i>(IN THE UPPER ROOM)</i>	
	JESUS PREPARES FOR THE CROSS	
Preparation for the paschal meal		(Mat.26:17-19)
The Last Supper		(Matt.26:20)
Jesus washes the disciples feet		(Jn.13:1-20)
Judas is exposed		(Matt.26:21-25)
Peter is warned		(Jn.13:31-38)
Jesus institutes the ordinance		(Matt.26:26-29)
Jesus' upper room discourse		(Jn.14)
	<i>(IN THE GARDEN)</i>	
Jesus' discourse on the way to Gethsemane		(Jn.15-16)
Jesus' intercessory prayer		(Jn.17)
Jesus in the garden to pray		(Matt.26:30-46)
Jesus' arrest		(Matt.26:47-56)
	Fri. am	
	<i>(AT THE TRIAL)</i>	
Jesus before Annas		(Jn.18:12-23)
Jesus before Caiaphas		(Matt.26:57-68)

Peter's denial	(Matt.26:69-75)
Jesus before the Sanhedrin	(Matt.27:1)
Judas takes his own life	(Matt.27:3-10)
Jesus before Pilate #1	(Jn.18:28-38)
Jesus before Herod Antipas	(Lk.23:6-12)
Jesus before Pilate #2	(Matt.27:15-26, Jn.18:39-19:16)
Soldiers mock Jesus	(Matt.27:27-30)
Jesus goes to the cross	(Matt.27:31-34)

Fri. pm**JESUS GIVES HIS LIFE A RANSOM FOR MANY**

The first 3 hours on the cross	(Matt.27:35-44, Jn.19:18-27)
The phenomena at His death	(Matt.27:51-56)
Jesus is buried	(Matt.27:57-60), (Jn.19:31-42)
The women are at the tomb	(Matt.27:61-66)

JESUS IS RAISED FOR OUR JUSTIFICATION*(THE ANNOUNCEMENT)***Sat. pm**

The women visit the tomb	(Matt.28:1)
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Sun. am

The stone is rolled away	(Matt.28:2-4)
The angelic explanation	(Matt.28:5-8)
The report to the Apostles	(Jn.20:2-10)

*(THE APPEARANCES)***Sun. pm**

To Mary	(Jn.20:11-18)
To the other women	(Matt.28:9-10)
The announcement to the Jewish rulers	(Matt.28:11-15)
To two disciples on the Emmaus road	(Lk.24:13-35)
To all the disciples but Thomas	(Jn.20:19-25)

The next Sun.

To Thomas	(Jn.20:26-31)
To 7 disciples by the Sea of Galilee	(Jn.21:1-25)
To 500	(Matt.28:16-20)

After 32 days

THE ASCENSION	(Acts 1:9-12)
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d. The Atonement - (**See the notes on CHRIST'S ATONEMENT #511**)

3. His descent into hades

a. The APOSTLES' CREED states - "He descended into hell (hades)"

b. Some of the early church fathers affirm this doctrine as did Luther and Calvin but the lack of clear Biblical evidence has led many to treat the doctrine as secondary.

c. This questionable notion is based upon four obscure texts.

1. **Ps.16:10** "For thou dost not give me up to Sheol, or let thy godly one see the pit" This text seems to be saying only that death would not have any permanent power over Jesus.

2. **Eph.4:8-10** “When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men. In dying, ‘He ascended,’ what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth?” The “lower parts of the earth” may be a reference simply to the incarnation “the lower parts, that is to say, the earth”.
3. **I Pet.3:18-20** “Christ also died for sins ... being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit; in which he went and preached to the spirits in prison who formerly did not obey, when God’s patience waited in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water.” This text probably refers to the fact that Christ spoke through Noah (in Noah's day) to people who are now in the grave. This is the spirit that Christ is presently working through in the church of our day.
4. **I Pet.4:4-6** “For this is why the gospel was preached even to the dead, that though judged in the flesh like men, they might live in the spirit like God.” This is probably a reference to the proclamation of the gospel message either to persons who had since died or to people who were spiritually dead.

C. **His exaltation (“the glories to follow” I Pet.1:11)**

1. His Resurrection (**See the notes on CHRIST’S RESURRECTION #510**)
2. His Ascension and session at the Father’s right hand.
 - a. Reasons for the ascension: To set up the operation of the church in this age. An important part of our understanding of Acts and the church age has to do with the significance of the ascension where Christ initiates key elements in the operation of the church.
 1. **Jn.14:2-3** – He prepares our new place or hope.
 2. **Jn.16:7** – He releases the Spirit to come – comfort, teach, enable, etc.
 3. **Heb.7:25** – He continues His intercession with the Father on our behalf.
 4. **Eph.4:7-11** - He distributes spiritual gifts to the church.
 5. **Jn.16:7** – He sends the power of the Holy Spirit to the church.
 6. **Acts 1:9-11** – He expresses the love of God for the disciples and the world.
 - b. Christ’s session:
 1. **Rom.8:34** “Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.”
 2. **Heb.7:25** - “He always lives to make intercession for them (those who draw near to God).” Heb.9:24
3. His Second Coming (**See the notes on CHRIST’S RETURN #903**)

Questions that you should be able to answer.

1. **Specific facts you should know.**
 - a. What evidence outside Scripture bears witness to Jesus’ existence?
 - b. How did the OT offices of Messiah relate to human needs?
 - c. How do Christ’s names relate to His offices?
 - d. What part of Jesus’ ministry receives the most attention in the gospels?

2. Issues that you should be able to discuss.

- a. What is the most important work of Christ and why?
- b. How does Jesus relate to us from each of the three offices that He occupies?