What Did Jesus Do?

Understanding the Work of Christ

R.C. Sproul
Incarnation

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

So often, we think of the work of Christ as something that began when He was baptized in the Jordan River around the age of thirty. In reality, however, the work of Christ began in eternity past in the covenant of redemption. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul explains how the humiliation of Christ in His incarnation and crucifixion and the exaltation of Christ in His resurrection and ascension are both grounded in the eternal covenant among the persons of the Trinity.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To be able to state the relation of each of the persons of the Trinity to the covenant of redemption.
2. To be able to summarize the pattern of humiliation and exaltation in the work of Christ.

QUOTATIONS

*Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

—Philippians 2:5–11
The pact of salvation makes known to us the relationships and life of the three persons in the Divine Being as a covenantal life, a life of consummate self-consciousness and freedom. Here, within the Divine Being, the covenant flourishes to the full. . . . The greatest freedom and the most perfect agreement coincide. The work of salvation is an undertaking of three persons in which all cooperate and each performs a special task.

—Herman Bavinck

LECTURE OUTLINE

I. Introduction
   a. In theology, we make a distinction between the person of Christ and the work of Christ.
   b. Although the distinction is important, we must never let it become a separation.
   c. We understand the work in light of the person doing the work, and the work itself reveals a great deal about the person.

II. The Covenant of Redemption
   a. The work of Christ begins in eternity past in the “covenant of redemption.”
   b. Although most Christians are familiar with the Abrahamic covenant, the Mosaic covenant, the Davidic covenant, and so on, not as many are familiar with the covenant of redemption.
   c. The covenant of redemption refers to a pact or an agreement that takes place in eternity within the Godhead.
   d. Not only is creation a Trinitarian work, redemption is also a Trinitarian work.
   e. The Father designs the plan of redemption.
   f. The Son is assigned to accomplish that redemption.
   g. The Holy Spirit is tasked with applying that redemption to us.

III. The Incarnation
   a. During His earthly ministry, Jesus said, “No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven” (John 3:13).
   b. With respect to the ministry of Jesus in this world, it begins with His descent.
   c. Jesus was born of the seed of David according to the flesh.
   d. In His birth we have the incarnation of God Himself.
   e. John tells us that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14).
   f. In this “enfleshment,” God does not undergo metamorphosis into a man.
   g. The incarnation is not so much a subtraction as it is an addition.
   h. The eternal second person of the Trinity takes upon Himself a human nature for the purpose of redemption.
IV. The Pattern of Humiliation and Exaltation
   a. The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Philippians writes: “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (2:5–11).
   b. In scholarly circles, this passage is known as the “kenotic hymn.”
   c. The Greek word *kenosis*, which is found in this passage, means “an emptying.”
   d. The emphasis of the passage is the transition that Jesus underwent by leaving His exalted state and becoming incarnate.
   e. The pattern found in this passage is the pattern of humiliation and exaltation.
   f. He begins exalted in heaven, but He condescends to join us in our predicament in order to redeem us.
   g. By entering into human flesh, He undergoes profound humiliation.
   h. Throughout His life, the humiliation becomes worse and worse until it reaches its nadir in the cross.
   i. After the crucifixion, He is resurrected and exalted to glory once again.

V. The Kenosis
   a. In Philippians 2, Paul tells Christians that unless we are willing to identify with the humiliation of Jesus, we will never share in His exaltation.
   b. The Son was willing to empty Himself and make Himself of no reputation.
   c. In the 19th century, liberal scholars proposed the Kenotic Theory of the incarnation, saying that the Son’s incarnation resulted in the laying aside of His divine attributes such as omniscience and omnipotence.
   d. But the divine nature does not lose its attributes in the incarnation.
   e. The human nature is truly human, and the divine nature remains fully and completely divine.
   f. What is emptied is glory, privilege, and exaltation.

VI. Exaltation to Former Glory
   a. After His humiliation, Jesus is again highly exalted.
   b. In His high priestly prayer, Jesus asked the Father to restore to Him the glory that He had from the beginning (John 17:5).
   c. This is exactly what the Father does once Jesus has completed His work.
d. In Philippians 2:9, Paul writes: “Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name.”

e. Many assume that the name referred to here is “Jesus.”

f. In fact, the name above every name is the title belonging only to God, namely, Adonai.

g. The name Adonai is given to Jesus.

BIBLE STUDY

1. Was the plan of redemption included in the eternal decree or counsel of God? What do each of the following texts indicate?
   a. Ephesians 1:4–11
   b. Ephesians 3:11
   c. 2 Thessalonians 2:13
   d. 2 Timothy 1:9
   e. James 2:5
   f. 1 Peter 1:2

2. Did the plan of salvation have the nature of a covenant? What do each of the following texts teach us?
   a. John 5:30, 43
   b. John 6:38–40
   c. John 17:4–12

3. How do Romans 5:12–21 and 1 Corinthians 15:22 support the idea that the eternal plan of redemption is a covenant?

4. What do each of the following texts have in common?
   a. John 6:38, 39
   b. John 10:18
   c. John 17:4

5. John 1:1–14 is one of the most significant New Testament texts dealing directly with the incarnation. Read these verses and outline the main points that are made in each section.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What was the role of the Father in the covenant of redemption? The Son? The Holy Spirit?

2. Regarding whether the parties to the covenant of grace are the Father and Christ or the Father and His people, Charles Hodge says, “The Westminster standards seem to adopt sometimes the one and sometimes the other mode of expression.” He argues that in the Confession (7:3), “the implication is that God and his people are the parties.” In the Larger Catechism, however, it is said that the covenant of grace “was made with Christ as the second Adam, and in Him with all the elect as his seed” (Q. 31). Are the two ideas contradictory? Inconsistent? Why or why not?

3. Louis Berkhof argues that it is better to say that the Word became flesh rather than saying that God became man. It is better, he says, because it was the second person of the Trinity that assumed human nature, not the Triune God. Do you agree? Why or why not?

APPLICATION

1. Reflect on the fact that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit planned your redemption from all eternity. Give praise to God for His amazing grace toward you.

2. The nadir of Christ’s humiliation was the cross on which He cried out as He was made sin who knew no sin, and the wrath of God was poured out on Him. Meditate on the following poem that reminds us that Jesus cried out as one forsaken in order that you and I may never have to.

   Yea, once Immanuel’s orphaned cry this universe hath shaken.
   It went up single, echoless, “My God! I am forsaken!”
   It went up from the Holy’s lips amidst his lost creation,
   That of the lost, no son should use these words of desolation.

SUGGESTED READING FOR FURTHER STUDY

Athanasius. *On the Incarnation.*
Infancy Hymns

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

Throughout the Old Testament, God’s major redemptive acts were celebrated in song. The Song of Moses in Exodus 15 celebrated the redemption of Israel from Egypt. The Song of Deborah in Judges 5 celebrated the defeat of the Canaanites. These and other songs are found throughout Israel’s history—many in the book of Psalms. All of these earlier redemptive acts, however, paled in comparison to the incarnation of the Son. In this lecture, Dr. R.C. Sproul looks at three songs that celebrated the coming of the Messiah.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To be able to explain the significance of biblical songs that celebrate God’s great acts of redemption.
2. To be able to summarize the main point of the three messianic hymns in the opening chapters of Luke.

QUOTATIONS

And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.”

What God has done in Christ demands to be praised. It is not enough simply to say what God has done to save us—what he has done also needs to be celebrated in song.

—Philip Graham Ryken

LECTURE OUTLINE

I. Introduction
   a. Before Jesus was born, there is the record of what we call the Annunciation—the announcement made by the angel Gabriel to Mary concerning her pregnancy.
   b. In the gospel of Luke, we have the account of three songs celebrating the incarnation.
   c. In our tradition, these songs are known by the first word of the song in Latin.

II. The Magnificat
   a. The song Mary sings after contemplating the announcement by Gabriel is known as the Magnificat.
   b. Mary is overwhelmed that she has been selected to be the mother of the Messiah.
   c. The Holy One of Israel has given her this unspeakable privilege.
   d. Mary celebrates the breathtaking power of God.
   e. Mary declares that God has pulled down the mighty and proud from their seats of power.
   f. She understands that this baby is tied to the expectations of Israel.
   g. He is born in the fullness (pleroma) of time.
   h. He is born in fulfillment of the ancient covenantal promises made to Abraham.

III. The Benedictus
   a. Similar themes are found in the Song of Zechariah, a song known as the Benedictus.
   b. Zechariah focuses on the visitation of God.
   c. The word “visitation” is based on a verb from which we get the noun translated bishop.
   d. The word episkopos is translated “bishop.”
   e. The parts that form the word episkopos literally mean someone that looks intently at what is being examined.
   f. In the ancient Greek world, the episkopos was the general of the armies who would come to the military bases and review the troops.
   g. The New Testament refers to Jesus as the bishop of our souls.
   h. The Jews longed for the day when the Lord Himself would visit.
   i. They feared the visitation could be a day of darkness, but they also held out hope that the visitation would be a day of redemption.
j. Zechariah celebrates the birth of Christ as a redeeming visit by God.
k. The Benedictus also ties the coming of Christ to the covenant promises made to Abraham.
l. In his words regarding John, Zechariah explains that the work of salvation will involve the remission of sins.

IV. The Nunc Dimittis
a. The Nunc Dimittis is the brief song of Simeon sung when Joseph and Mary bring Jesus to the temple.
b. Simeon had been promised by God that he would not die until he saw the Messiah—the “consolation of Israel.”
c. When Jesus is brought to the temple, Simeon recognizes that the child is the promised Messiah and begins to praise God.

BIBLE STUDY

1. Read the Song of Moses in Exodus 15, the Song of Deborah in Judges 5, and the Song of David in 2 Samuel 22. What do each of these songs teach us about God?


3. What two images of God are prevalent in the Magnificat?

4. Read the Benedictus in Luke 1:68–79. How does Zechariah tie the redemptive roles of John and Jesus together in this song?

5. Read the Nunc Dimittis in Luke 2:29–32. The Magnificat and the Benedictus explicitly mention Christ as the one who fulfills the Abrahamic covenant. In what way does Simeon’s brief song implicitly point to Christ as the one who fulfills the Abrahamic covenant (cf. Gen. 12:1–3)?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Many Christians have read and re-read the New Testament without ever having read the Old Testament. Having studied the contents of the three songs in Luke 1–2, do you believe we can fully understand the person and work of Christ apart from an understanding of the Old Testament promises?

2. Many Protestants are fearful that any kind of respect for Mary borders on Roman Catholicism. How does the Magnificat inform a proper understanding of Mary? What should our attitude toward Mary be?

3. When Gabriel foretells the birth of Jesus to Mary, he tells her that her son will be
called “the Son of the Most High” (Luke 1:32). In the Benedictus, Zechariah says of John that he will be called “the prophet of the Most High” (1:76). What is the significance of the difference in these titles?

APPLICATION

1. Martin Luther said that Mary’s song was about “the great works and deeds of God, for the strengthening of our faith, for the comforting of all those of low degree, and for the terrifying of all the mighty ones of earth. We are to let the hymn serve this threefold purpose; for she sang it not for herself alone but for us all, to sing it after her.” Consider the words of Mary’s song. Let these words strengthen your faith; let them comfort you with the truth of God’s faithfulness; let them humble your pride. Consider how He who is mighty has not only done great things for Mary, but for you as well, through the death and resurrection of Mary’s child, God’s Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

2. When reading the Benedictus, consider the tender mercy of God toward you, and thank Him for the forgiveness of your sins provided through this One who was born of the Virgin Mary.

3. Regarding Simeon (and Anna), J.C. Ryle wrote, “If they, with so few helps and so many discouragements, lived such a life of faith, how much more ought we with a finished Bible and a full Gospel. Let us strive, like them, to walk by faith and look forward.”

SUGGESTED READING FOR FURTHER STUDY

Boy Jesus in the Temple

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The New Testament tells us very little about the years between Jesus’ birth and the beginning of His ministry. The gospel of Luke contains the one significant account that exists—the story of Jesus’ visit to the temple at the age of twelve. In this lecture, Dr. R.C. Sproul explains what we can learn about the person and work of Christ from this brief narrative.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To be able to explain the effects of sin on the human mind.
2. To be able to explain how the lack of sin made Jesus unique in terms of His thinking.

QUOTATIONS

And he said to them, “Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”

— Luke 2:49

It is remarkable that the first words of Jesus quoted in the Gospel narrative are these words in which He so clearly refers to His divine Sonship, and in which He points to His life’s vocation to be about His Father’s business—to serve and glorify Him in all things and at all times. The words indicate a divine inevitability: Jesus must be busy with the interests of His Father. With Him it is, however, not a case of external compulsion—His whole nature yearns to serve and obey His Father voluntarily.

—Norval Geldenhuys
LECTURE OUTLINE

I. Introduction
   a. The record of Jesus’ visit to the temple at the age of twelve usually receives very little attention.
   b. This text is the only passage in the New Testament that tells us anything about this period of Jesus’ life.
   c. The apocryphal gospels created in the second and third centuries by the Gnostic heretics often speculated about what happened during Jesus’ childhood.
   d. Many of them are filled with fanciful stories that involve Jesus using His power in trivial ways.

II. The Temple Visit
   a. The narrative of Jesus’ childhood visit to the temple is recorded in Luke 2:41–51.
   b. This episode emphasizes the response of the theologians of Jesus’ day to His incredible knowledge of Scripture and theology.

III. The Noetic Effects of Sin
   a. The knowledge of Jesus was radically different from everyone else’s.
   b. In the fall, the effects of sin permeated the whole human person.
   c. The fall had a significant impact upon the minds of human beings.
   d. In theology, the effect of the fall on the mind is called the noetic effect of sin.
   e. The word noetic comes from the Greek word nous, which means “mind.”
   f. Sin clouds the mind and impairs our ability to think clearly.
   g. We still have the capacity for reason, yet at the same time, all of us are given to making mistakes in our thinking.
   h. Even though we have the same Bible, Christians disagree, sometimes seriously, about the meaning of certain parts of the Bible.
   i. All of us fail to apply ourselves as seriously as we could to the study of Scripture.
   j. We also come to the text of Scripture with biases that are difficult to overcome.
   k. The very act of thinking has been weakened by sin.
   l. Before Jesus, no one’s mind had functioned apart from these noetic effects of sin.
   m. Jesus was not weakened by any of these effects because Jesus was not impacted by original sin.
   n. As a twelve year old, He could think more profoundly than the most learned theologians of His day.

IV. Fully Human and Fully Divine
a. Some say that Jesus was so profound because He was God and God is omniscient.
b. He was God incarnate, and God is omniscient, but touching His human nature, Jesus was not given a divine brain.
c. He was not endowed in His human nature with the divine attribute of omniscience.
d. The divine nature did not communicate the divine attribute of omniscience to the human nature.

V. In My Father’s House
a. According to the text of Luke’s gospel, Jesus was brought to the temple at the age of twelve.
b. After the family leaves and has been traveling for an entire day, they notice Jesus is not with them.
c. They returned to Jerusalem, and after three days of searching, they found Him in the temple in the midst of the teachers there.
d. The teachers were amazed at His understanding.
e. When Mary asks Him why He did this, Jesus says, “Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”
f. Jesus is politely rebuking His mother for not knowing what she should have known in light of all the revelation she had received.
g. Even at the age of twelve, Jesus knew that He had a task to perform.
h. He was subordinate to the Father, not in respect of His being, but in respect of the work He was called to do.

BIBLE STUDY

1. Read the entire account of Jesus’ visit to the temple in Luke 2:41–52. What is the one overarching point that is made in this passage of Scripture?

2. There is some ambiguity in the translation of the words Jesus spoke because the Greek reads literally: “Did you not know that I must be in the . . . of my Father?” Three interpretations have been suggested:
   a. Jesus says He must be among those of His Father’s house, that is, among the Jewish teachers of the law.
   b. Jesus says He must be about His Father’s business.
   c. Jesus says He must be in His Father’s house, that is, He must be involved with instruction in divine things.

   Based on the context, what are the strengths and weaknesses of each proposed interpretation? Which do you find most persuasive? Why?
3. The words Jesus speaks in verse 49 are the first words of Jesus that are recorded in Scripture. All of the other words of Christ that are recorded were spoken after the beginning of His ministry. Assuming the correctness of the translation: “I must be in my Father’s house,” how are these words significant to our understanding of the person and work of Christ?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. It is not unreasonable to assume that some of the teachers mentioned in this text, teachers who were amazed at Jesus’ understanding and answers, were still alive when He began His public ministry eighteen years later. According to the Gospels, however, the reaction to Jesus by the Jewish teachers at that time is largely hostile. What accounts for the different response?

2. How does a proper doctrine of the relationship between Jesus’ divine and human natures help us understand the words of Luke 2:52?

3. What are some of the ways that the noetic effects of sin contribute to doctrinal disagreements among Bible-believing Christians?

APPLICATION

1. Although He was the Son of God, Jesus submitted to His earthly parents (Luke 2:51). Strive to demonstrate the same kind of humble submission to those in authority over you.

2. Because Jesus accomplished the work given to Him by His Father, we can now also call God our Father. Give praise to God for this amazing privilege.

SUGGESTED READING FOR FURTHER STUDY

Baptism

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

After four hundred years of silence, the voice of prophecy resumed in Israel with the arrival of John the Baptist. He came, calling all Israel to repent and be baptized. Jesus’ baptism by John marks the official beginning of His public ministry. In this lecture, Dr. R.C. Sproul looks closely at the baptism of Jesus, explaining how significant it was in his life and how relevant it is for our salvation.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To be able to explain the significance of the baptism of Jesus in his public ministry.
2. To be able to explain why it was necessary for Jesus to fulfill all righteousness.

QUOTATIONS

So here is Jesus, at the beginning of his ministry as at its close, numbered among the transgressors, not ashamed to call them his brothers and placing himself under the law to redeem those who are under the law. A trinity of condescension, love and grace combine in this moment of theophany as the God-man, clothes dripping from his standing in Jordan’s streams, receives a shower of blessing from on high.

—Iain Campbell

The most obvious way in which Jesus’ baptism prepares for his mission is by indicating his solidarity with John’s call to repentance in view of the arrival of God’s kingship. By first identifying with John’s proclamation Jesus lays the foundation for his own mission to take on where John has left off. Further, as Jesus is baptized along with others at the Jordan, he is identified with all those who by accepting John’s baptism have declared their desire for a new beginning with God. He thus prepares for his own role in “bearing their weaknesses” (8:17) and eventually “giving his life as a ransom for many” (20:28) through shedding his blood for their forgiveness (26:28). If he is to be their representative, he must first be identified with them.

—R. T. France
LECTURE OUTLINE

I. Introduction
   a. The beginning of Jesus’ public ministry occurs at His baptism by John the Baptist.
   b. It is important to realize the radical nature of this event.

II. John the Baptist
   a. John arrived on the scene after the voice of prophecy had been silent for some four hundred years.
   b. After four centuries, John comes out of the desert, the traditional meeting place between God and the prophets, speaking as one having authority from God.
   c. The most radical thing John did was to call the people of Israel to be baptized.
   d. At this time, proselyte baptism was required of Gentiles who wanted to join the covenant community of Israel.
   e. They were baptized because they were considered unclean.
   f. John comes along and begins calling Jews to submit to a cleansing ritual.
   g. His message greatly offended the Pharisees and religious leaders.
   h. The prophets had said there would be a forerunner who would prepare the way for the Messiah.
   i. John is the forerunner.
   j. He calls the people to repent because the kingdom of God is at hand.
   k. The King is about to appear, the Messiah is at the door, and Israel is not ready because she is unclean.

III. The Baptism of Jesus
   a. When John saw Jesus approaching, he said: “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”
   b. This aspect of Jesus’ ministry caused the Jews the most difficulty; they could not grasp how the Messiah could be a sacrificial lamb.
   c. Jesus’ baptism marks the beginning of His ministry; it is His ordination, as it were.
   d. At His baptism, He is anointed in order to fulfill Isaiah 61.
   e. The human Jesus is anointed by the Holy Spirit to fulfill the mission of the Messiah.
   f. John tried to prevent Jesus’ baptism at first because baptism was for sinners.
   g. Jesus did not explain everything to John but merely said, “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.”
IV. To Fulfill All Righteousness  
   a. This statement that Jesus makes in response to John is crucial for understanding the work of Christ. 
   b. It meant that Jesus was to obey every jot and tittle of the law. 
   c. If His people are required to submit to this baptism, He submits to it as well on their behalf because His redemptive work does not commence at the cross. 
   d. Jesus not only had to die for our sins; He had to live for our righteousness. 
   e. If Jesus only died for your sins, that would leave you sinless, but not righteous. 
   f. The passive obedience of Christ refers to His willing submission to the wrath of God on the cross. 
   g. The active obedience of Christ refers to His whole life of obeying the law. 
   h. Jesus obeys the law perfectly, thereby receiving the blessing rather than the curse. 
   i. Our sin is imputed to Him on the cross. 
   j. His righteousness is imputed to us, but He would not have this righteousness if He didn't live a life of perfect obedience. 
   k. This is double imputation.

BIBLE STUDY

1. According to John 1:31, why did John come baptizing with water? How would his work of baptizing with water accomplish this goal?

2. Read Matthew 3:2 and compare this message of John with the following Old Testament texts:
   a. Isaiah 31:6; 45:22; 55:7
   b. Jeremiah 3:7, 10, 14, 22; 4:1; 8:5; 18:11; 24:7; 25:5; 26:3; 35:15; 36:7; 44:5
   c. Ezekiel 13:22; 14:6; 18:23, 30; 33:9
   d. Hosea 11:5; 12:6; 14:1–2
   e. Joel 2:12–13
   f. Zechariah 1:3–4
   g. Malachi 3:7

   What does John’s message have in common with the message of the Old Testament prophets? Where does it differ?

3. Read what God says concerning Jesus in Matthew 3:17 and compare this with the beginning of the Servant Song in Isaiah 42:1 and with Psalm 2:7. If Matthew 3:17 echoes these Old Testament texts, what does God’s pronouncement after the baptism say about Jesus?
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In the first century, John declared that “the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” This and other passages (e.g., Matt. 3:2) speak of the nearness or presence of the kingdom. Elsewhere in Matthew, there are passages that speak of the kingdom as something still future (e.g., Matt. 6:10). Some theologians speak of the kingdom as something that has *already* been inaugurated at Christ’s first coming but is *not yet* consummated. Does this already/not yet concept help explain these passages in Matthew? Why or why not?

2. What does John mean when he tells the Pharisees and Sadducees that God is able from stones to raise up children for Abraham (Matt. 3:9)?

3. Why is the active obedience of Christ as important as the passive obedience of Christ for our salvation?

APPLICATION

1. Those who have placed their faith in Christ have been baptized with water and with the Spirit. Remind yourself daily of the results of your baptism.

2. Do not grow weary in praying “Thy kingdom come.” Christ’s kingdom has been inaugurated. He is seated at the right hand of God. He is presently putting all enemies under His feet, but the kingdom will not be consummated until His Second Coming. Thank God for our anointed King.

SUGGESTED READING FOR FURTHER STUDY

- Mathison, Keith A. *From Age to Age*, pp. 347–51.
Temptation

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

Immediately after His baptism, Jesus is driven into the wilderness to be tempted by the Devil. We are reminded here not only of Israel’s testing in the wilderness, but of the original test—the temptation of Adam. In this lecture, Dr. R.C. Sproul compares and contrasts the temptations of the first Adam and the second Adam, explaining how the results of each rested on whether trust was placed in the Word of God.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To be able to explain the process by which the serpent was able to tempt Adam and Eve to distrust the Word of God.
2. To be able to explain the similarities and differences between the temptations of Adam and Jesus.

QUOTATIONS

“Yea, hath God said . . . .”
—Satan

“It is written . . . .”
—Jesus

LECTURE OUTLINE

I. Introduction
   a. Following His baptism, the very first thing the Spirit directed Jesus to do was to go into the wilderness to be tempted for forty days.
   b. The reason He had to be tempted was because part of His essential work was to be the second Adam.
c. Two important passages presenting Christ as the second Adam.
   i. Romans 5:12–19.
   ii. 1 Corinthians 15:21–22, 45–49.

II. The Differences Between Adam's Temptation and Jesus' Temptation
   a. Location
      i. The first Adam was tempted in paradise.
      ii. The second Adam was tempted in a desolate wilderness.
   b. Companionship
      i. The first Adam was tempted while together with Eve.
      ii. The second Adam was tempted while in absolute solitude.
   c. Food
      i. The first Adam was tempted while able to eat all kinds of food.
      ii. The second Adam was tempted during a forty-day fast.
   d. Sin
      i. The first Adam was tempted before there was any customary practice of sin.
      ii. The second Adam was tempted when there was nothing more commonplace than the practice of sin.

III. The Similarities Between Adam's Temptation and Jesus' Temptation
   a. The Temptation of Adam
      i. The serpent’s temptation of Eve begins with the subtle question: “Hath God said?”
      ii. Satan questions the Word of God.
      iii. Eve informs the Serpent that God had not said what was suggested.
      iv. The serpent then moves to a lie, contradicting God's Word directly.
      v. The point of attack is the trustworthiness, authority, and truth of the Word of God.
   b. The Temptation of Jesus
      i. Satan attacks Jesus at the end of a forty-day fast.
      ii. He says, “If you are the Son of God . . . .”
      iii. This questions the truthfulness of the words God spoke following Jesus’ baptism.
      iv. Jesus responds by appealing to the Word of God.
      v. Satan then attacks Jesus by quoting Scripture.
      vi. Jesus responds by denying Satan's interpretation of Scripture, an interpretation that sets one part of Scripture against another part.
      vii. Finally Satan promises Jesus that he will be given all the kingdoms of the world if He will only worship Satan.
      viii. Again, Jesus responds by appealing to the written Word of God.
1. All three of Jesus' responses to Satan's temptations are quotations taken from Deuteronomy 6–8. These chapters of Deuteronomy warn Israel not to forget God as they did during the previous generation. Read Deuteronomy 6–8. How does Jesus recapitulate Israel's experience in the wilderness? What does this indicate about the nature of Jesus' ministry?

2. Read the account of the Serpent's temptation of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:1–6 and compare it with the accounts of the temptation in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. What do the similarities indicate about the nature of Jesus' ministry?

3. Read Romans 5:12–19 and 1 Corinthians 15:21–49. What important theological doctrines does Paul rest on the comparison between Adam and Jesus?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Adam, Israel, and Jesus are all three referred to at some point in Scripture as God's “son” (e.g., Luke 3:38; Hosea 11:1; Matt. 3:17). Does this help us understand why Jesus' temptation shows similarities to the testing of both Adam and Israel? Why or why not?

2. Matthew in particular draws comparisons between Jesus and Israel throughout the first chapters of his gospel. The genealogy presents Jesus as the culmination of Israel's history. The flight to and return from Egypt indicates that the long awaited new exodus has begun. The slaughter of the children portrays Jesus as a new Moses. The forty-day testing in the wilderness is reminiscent of Israel's forty-year time of wilderness testing, and the Sermon on the Mount reminds us of the giving of the law on Mount Sinai. If Jesus is in some sense recapitulating Israel's history, how might this help us better understand both the Old and New Testaments?

APPLICATION

1. Are you surprised when God allows you to experience times of extreme difficulty, testing, and temptation? Consider again that the Son of God Himself experienced such testing. Be encouraged for He does not allow us to be tested beyond what we can handle.

2. Meditate on this portion of God's Word today. Consider the fact that Satan's temptations are not always overt and obvious, but sometimes very subtle. Guard your heart in dependence on the grace of God to withstand the assaults of the enemy when they come.
3. Take the time to study the portion of Scripture Jesus used in His response to Satan, Deuteronomy 6–8. Memorize it if you are able.

SUGGESTED READING FOR FURTHER STUDY

Mathison, Keith A. *From Age to Age*, pp. 350.
Strauss, Mark L. *Four Portraits, One Jesus*, pp. 430–32.
MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the gospel of John, the apostle declares, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory.” The transfiguration, the moment when the previously concealed glory of Christ was revealed to Jesus’ closest disciples, was a remarkable demonstration of Christ’s divinity. In this lecture, Dr. R.C. Sproul looks at the account of the transfiguration, explaining its significance in the ministry of Christ.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To be able to place the transfiguration in the context of previous revelations of the glory of Christ.
2. To be able to explain the significance of the transfiguration in the life and work of Christ.

QUOTATIONS

One of the greatest privileges and advancements of believers, both in this world and to eternity, consists in their beholding the glory of Christ.

—John Owen

The transfiguration is a dramatic indication of the resplendent glory which belongs to Jesus as God’s unique Son. As a revelation of the concealed splendor of the Son of Man, the event points forward to the advent . . . when Jesus’ status as the eschatological Judge will be manifested to the world. The episode provides a personal and preliminary revelation that he whom the disciples follow on a way marked by suffering and humiliation is the Son of man whose total ministry has cosmic implications.

—William Lane
LECTURE OUTLINE

I. Introduction
   a. Jesus’ transfiguration communicates something of vital importance.
   b. One of His chief responsibilities was to manifest the glory of God.

II. The Transfiguration
   a. Matthew’s account of the transfiguration is found in chapter 17 of his gospel.
   b. There was a general progression in the life of Jesus that moved from humiliation to exaltation.
   c. For the most part, the deity that Christ shared with the Father and Holy Spirit was cloaked.
   d. As Jesus begins His final trek to Jerusalem He goes to a high mountain with Peter, James, and John where He is transfigured before their eyes.
   e. The word transfiguration comes from the Greek word metamorphoō.
   f. We get the English word metamorphosis from this Greek word.

III. Jesus’ Face
   a. Matthew says that Jesus’ face shone like the sun.
   b. This reminds us of what happened to Moses after he caught a glimpse of God’s glory (Exod. 34:29–33).
   c. After God revealed Himself to Moses, his face shone, and he had to veil himself before the people of Israel.
   d. Moses shone with the reflected light of God’s glory, but Jesus shone with light that emanated from within Himself.
   e. Paul saw this glory on the road to Damascus.
   f. This glory is so bright that there will be no need for sunlight in the new heavens and new earth.

IV. Jesus’ Clothes
   a. Matthew also tells us that Jesus’ clothes became white as light.
   b. There was not a single blemish or stain.
   c. The absence of all color is blackness.
   d. The reflection of all color is absolute white.
   e. Herman Melville’s Moby Dick contains a chapter titled “The Whiteness of the Whale,” which portrays the whale as a symbol for God.

V. The Voice of God
   a. As Jesus is transfigured He is joined on the mountain by Moses and Elijah.
   b. Moses represents the law, while Elijah represents the prophets.
   c. Peter offers to make three tents, one for Jesus, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.
   d. While Peter was still speaking, a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice
came from the cloud.

e. They heard the voice say, “This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.”

BIBLE STUDY

1. Numerous commentators have noted apparent parallels between the Sinai account in Exodus and the transfiguration account in the Gospels (Matt. 17:1–8; Mark 9:2–8; Luke 9:28–36). Some of the possible parallels are:
   a. Both involve a high mountain (cf. Exod. 24:12, 15–18).
   b. In both, a cloud descends on the mountain (cf. Exod. 24:15–18).
   c. In both, God speaks from the cloud (cf. Exod. 24:16).
   d. The central figure in both accounts becomes radiant (cf. Exod. 34:29–35).
   e. In both accounts, the events are said to begin after six days (cf. Exod. 24:16).

   If the transfiguration was intended to echo the Sinai account, what would its main point be?

2. The transfiguration account speaks of a “bright cloud” (Matt. 17:5). Given texts such as Exodus 24:15–18 and 40:34–38, how should we understand this cloud that descends on the mountain at the transfiguration?

3. Read Deuteronomy 18:15. How does Matthew 17:5 allude to this verse? Granted that Matthew has Deuteronomy 18 in mind, what are we being told about Jesus?

4. Matthew 17:6 and 27:54 are the only two places where Matthew uses the Greek phrase ἐφοβεθησαν σφόδρα, which has to do with being terrified or filled with fear. Are there any other similarities between the transfiguration account and the crucifixion account?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. All three accounts of the transfiguration are preceded by an enigmatic prophecy made a week earlier in which Christ says, “Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom (Matt. 16:28; cf. Mark 9:1; Luke 9:27). Some commentators and theologians argue that the transfiguration is the fulfillment of this prophecy. Is this likely? Why or why not?

2. Matthew in particular tends to portray Jesus in terms of a “new Moses.” How does the account of the transfiguration contribute to this understanding of Christ? What are the similarities and differences between Moses and Jesus?
3. Why do you think Jesus revealed His glory to only three of the disciples rather than to all of them?

APPLICATION

1. Take time this week to read and meditate on 2 Corinthians 3:18, which says that we all beholding the glory of the Lord are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.

2. We hear the Word of the Lord preached weekly. Do you listen to Him? If not, resolve to do so beginning today.

SUGGESTED READING FOR FURTHER STUDY

France, R.T. Matthew: Evangelist & Teacher, pp. 186–89.
Triumphal Entrance

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

When “the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee” triumphantly entered into Jerusalem, He did so in fulfillment of an Old Testament promise that Israel’s king would come to the city riding a donkey. In this lecture, Dr. R.C. Sproul will examine Jesus’ three mediatorial offices, not only as our prophet and king, but as our high priest as well.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To be able to explain Christ’s role in the office of prophet.
2. To be able to explain Christ’s role in the office of priest.
3. To be able to explain Christ’s role in the office of king.

QUOTATIONS

*In Christ’s God-to-humanity relation, he is a prophet; in his humanity-to-God relation he is a priest; in his headship over all humanity he is a king.*

—Herman Bavinck

*It is by the exercise and discharge of the office of Christ—as the king, priest, and prophet of the church—that we are redeemed, sanctified, and saved. Thereby doth he immediately communicate all Gospel benefits unto us—give us an access unto God here by grace, and in glory hereafter; for he saves us, as he is the mediator between God and man.*

—John Owen

LECTURE OUTLINE

I. Introduction
   a. The transfiguration was a moment of unsurpassed glory and joy for those who beheld it.
b. The joy turned to despair when Jesus reminded them that He was going to Jerusalem where He would suffer and die.

II. The Triumphal Entry
   a. The account of the triumphal entry is found in Matthew 21.
   b. Why did Jesus stage such a grand entry?
   c. Matthew tells us He did it in order to fulfill Old Testament prophecy.
   d. In the account of the triumphal entry, two of Christ’s offices are in view: prophet and king.
   e. Prior to this point in time Jesus did not want His disciples to tell anyone He was the Messiah.
   f. The people had an incorrect understanding of what the Messiah would do.
   g. The people expected a great warrior who would free them from Rome, but Christ was focused on the Messiah’s role as a suffering servant.
   h. At His triumphal entry, He no longer conceals His identity.

III. The Offices of Christ
   a. All three offices are offices that are performed by some kind of mediator.
   b. Christ is the unique Mediator, but that does not mean lower forms of mediatorial service did not function in Old Testament times.
   c. What made them mediators was that they stood in some way between the people and God.

IV. The Prophet
   a. The supreme prophet of all time is Jesus.
   b. Jesus does not simply speak the Word; He is the Word.
   c. The difference between Jesus and the rest of the prophets is that Jesus was both the subject and object of prophecy.
   d. Most of the prophetic statements that Jesus made were about Himself.

V. The Priest
   a. Priests also had subjective and objective dimensions to their work.
   b. They were subjectively involved in making the offerings.
   c. Their principal task was to offer sacrifices on behalf of the people.
   d. When Jesus offers the sacrifice, the sacrifice that He offers is Himself.
   e. All of the Old Testament sacrifices were symbolic and pointed to Christ.
   f. Jesus’ contemporaries couldn’t understand how Jesus could be both priest and king because the king was to be from the tribe of Judah and priests were from the tribe of Levi.
   g. Jesus was a priest in the order of Melchizedek, which is a higher order of priesthood than that of the Levites.
VI. The King
   a. In the triumphal entry, the accent is on the office of king.
   b. In the Old Testament economy, the king was not autonomous.
   c. The king was subject to God’s law and was supposed to mediate God’s rule.
   d. Jesus is the One who is both David’s son and David’s Lord.
   e. Jesus fulfills all of the Old Testament promises concerning the coming king.
   f. To this King God promised to give all authority on heaven and earth.

BIBLE STUDY

1. Read Exodus 7:1 and Deuteronomy 18:18. What are the two elements involved in the function of a prophet? Hint: one element is passive; one is active.

2. What insight do each of the following texts give us into the prophetic office of Christ?
   c. John 8:26–28

3. The classic text describing the function of a priest is Hebrews 5:1. What does this text tell us about priests?

4. The priestly work of Christ involves what two tasks according to the following Scriptures:
   a. Hebrews 10:14
   b. Hebrews 7:25

5. What do each of the following texts teach us about the kingship of Christ?
   a. Psalm 2:6
   b. Isaiah 9:6–7
   c. Daniel 7:14
   d. Luke 1:33
   e. Acts 2:30–36
   f. Colossians 1:13
   g. Revelation 1:5

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How would you describe the relationship between the Word of God incarnate, the Word of God written, and the Word of God preached?

2. According to Hebrews, Jesus fulfilled everything the Old Testament sacrifices and priesthood symbolized when as the great High Priest, He offered Himself once and
for all. If you were discussing the Roman Catholic priesthood and the sacrifice of the Mass with a Roman Catholic, how would Hebrews inform your discussion?

3. When Scripture speaks of Jesus as the “ruler of the kings of the earth,” does that mean that every national government should explicitly and publicly express its submission to Jesus Christ prior to the second coming of Christ? Why or why not?

APPLICATION

1. Jesus intercedes always for us, and we are called to intercede in prayer for others. Take time right now to pray for someone you know who is suffering.

2. Take time this week to meditate on each of Christ’s offices. Consider how each serves toward your salvation.

SUGGESTED READING FOR FURTHER STUDY

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

In the Old Testament, the Passover lamb distinguished the people of God from the unbelieving Egyptians. The Passover also marked Israel’s redemption from Egypt. The Old Testament prophets described the future redemption of Israel in terms of a new exodus. In this lecture, Dr. R.C. Sproul looks at the Last Supper, showing how Christ is our Passover lamb in this meal that marks the arrival of the greater exodus, redemption from slavery to sin and death.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To be able to explain the significance of the Old Testament Passover.
2. To be able to explain the basic meaning of the Lord’s Supper.

QUOTATIONS

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?

—1 Corinthians 10:16

If Christ is our head, and dwells in us, he communicates to us his life; and we have nothing to hope from until we are united to his body. The whole reality of the sacred Supper consists in this—Christ, by ingrafting us into his body, not only makes us partakers of his body and blood, but infuses into us the life whose fulness resides in himself: for his flesh is not eaten for any other end than to give us life.

—John Calvin
LECTURE OUTLINE

I. Introduction
   a. Jesus was received enthusiastically by the multitudes, but the religious establishment was outraged by His triumphal entry.
   b. In Luke 22, we are told that just as the Feast of Unleavened Bread is being prepared, the religious leaders are entering into a conspiracy to do away with Jesus.
   c. At the same time, Jesus is preparing to celebrate the Passover with His disciples.

II. When the hour had come
   a. At this point, Jesus is entering into what is called His “passion.”
   b. Jesus is fully aware of His impending execution.
   c. As they are preparing for the Passover, we read, “When the hour had come . . . .”
   d. Throughout His ministry multiple references are made to Jesus’ “hour.”
   e. Many times, He says, “My hour is not yet come.”
   f. Now the hour of crisis is at hand.

III. The Passover
   a. The Passover commemorated God’s redemptive action in saving His people at the time of the exodus from Egypt.
   b. During the tenth plague, God instructed His people to place the blood of a lamb on their doors.
   c. God would pass over the houses of those marked with the blood of the lamb and spare their firstborn.
   d. After sparing the Israelites and judging the Egyptians, God brought His people out of slavery in Egypt.
   e. The Passover was celebrated every year, and the father was required to explain the meaning of the meal to the children.
   f. The Passover was a call to remembrance, a celebration of something that had taken place in the past.
   g. The Passover also looked forward to the future when the perfect Passover lamb would be sacrificed, ending the sacrificial system once and for all.
   h. The future Passover would mark the beginning of a new and greater exodus out of the bondage of sin and death—Satan himself.

IV. The Last Supper
   a. After gathering His disciples for the Passover, Jesus begins going through the Passover liturgy, and He changes it.
   b. The only person in the world with the authority to change the Passover liturgy was Jesus because the Passover was about Him.
c. Jesus is the Passover Lamb.
d. In the upper room, the New Testament church was born.
e. The new covenant established in the upper room is ratified the next day in Jesus’ own blood.
f. After He took the bread, He changed the meaning of the bread by saying, “This is my body.”
g. There is great controversy about what Jesus meant when He spoke these words.
h. Jesus also changed the meaning of the cup saying, “This is the cup of the New Testament which is in my blood, which is shed for the remission of your sins.”
i. It is interesting to note that in the early church, Christians celebrated this new covenant sacrament once a week because it was understood to be so important.

V. The Meaning of the Supper
   a. Churches are hopelessly divided in their understanding of what happens in the celebration of the Lord's Supper.
   b. The Roman Catholic Church developed the doctrine of transubstantiation, arguing that the substance of the bread and wine changes while the accidents remain the same.
   c. Martin Luther argued that there is no change in the substance of the bread, but that Christ is in, under, and with the elements.
   d. John Calvin disagreed with both views because of the doctrine of Christ taught at the Council of Chalcedon.
   e. According to Chalcedon, the human nature of Christ is not deified; it retains its own attributes.
   f. The human nature is limited in space.
   g. Rome and Luther got around that with their doctrine of the communication of attributes.
   h. At St. Andrew’s Church in Sanford, Florida, we believe that Christ is present by His divine nature.

BIBLE STUDY
1. Read Exodus 12:1–51, and answer the following questions:
   a. Why is it significant that God tells Moses that this Passover will be the beginning of a new calendar for Israel?
   b. What principal thing does God command the Israelites to do in preparation for the Passover?
   c. Does the Passover distinguish between the act of sacrifice and the sacrificial meal? If so, is the eating of the lamb the act of sacrifice or the sacrificial meal? Is such a distinction significant? Why or why not?
d. What prerequisite for participation in the Passover is emphasized repeatedly in Exodus 12:43–48?

2. Read Matthew 26:26. What four things did Jesus do with the bread? What two things does He tell the disciples to do with the bread? What does Jesus say about the bread? Normally, the Passover liturgy would include the following words “This is the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate when they came from the land of Egypt.” Is it reasonable to suppose that the Jews who used these words believed they were eating the very pieces of bread that their ancestors had eaten and digested? Is it more reasonable to suppose that the Jews used this language to point to their own real participation in the act of redemption that their ancestors had experienced firsthand? How does our understanding of the words used in the normal Passover liturgy help in our understanding of Jesus’ words about the bread?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The Passover was a communal, family-oriented sacrament of the Old Covenant. What significance, if any, does this have for our understanding of the Lord’s Supper?

2. The Roman Catholic Church defines a sacrament as “a symbol of a sacred thing.” Does the doctrine of transubstantiation conflict with this definition? If so, how?

3. How do the Roman Catholic and Lutheran doctrines of the Lord’s Supper conflict with the Definition of Chalcedon?

APPLICATION

1. Reflect on what it means to be saved from the wrath of God, to have God’s judgment pass over you. The next time you partake of the Lord’s Supper, give thanks (eucharist) to God for marking you with the blood of the Lamb and sparing you from His judgment and wrath.

2. Reflect on what you have learned in this lecture that will help you as you approach the Lord’s Table in the future.

SUGGESTED READING FOR FURTHER STUDY

Bruce, Robert. The Mystery of the Lord’s Supper.
Mathison, Keith A. Given For You.
Crucifixion

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The apex of Christ’s redemptive work occurred when He was nailed to the cross and bore the penalty due to us. His crucifixion was an act of propitiation, satisfying the justice of God. In this lecture, Dr. R.C. Sproul explains what happened on the cross, how Christ was both a propitiation for sin and our redeemer.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To be able to explain how Christ was our propitiation on the cross.
2. To be able to explain what it means for Christ to be our redeemer.

QUOTATIONS

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

—Isaac Watts

In pagan propitiation, a human being offers a propitiatory sacrifice to make a god propitious. In Christian propitiation, God the Father sets forth Jesus as the propitiation to make himself propitious; God is both the subject and the object of propitiation. God is the one who provides the sacrifice precisely as a way of turning aside his own wrath. God the Father is thus the propitiator and the propitiated, and God the Son is the propitiation.

—D.A. Carson
LECTURE OUTLINE

I. Introduction
   a. The apostle Paul said that he was determined to know nothing except Christ and Him crucified.
   b. What Paul is saying is that in the crucifixion we reach the zenith of the work of Christ.
   c. It is unlikely that eyewitnesses of the crucifixion realized that they were witnessing an act of atonement.
   d. We see the interpretation of the crucifixion in the New Testament epistles.

II. Propitiation
   a. In Romans 3:21, Paul makes two comments in reference to our justification as it relates to the work of Jesus.
   b. Paul says that in the shedding of Christ's blood, there occurred an act of propitiation.
   c. The Jew who read this would understand it in light of the Old Testament Day of Atonement.
   d. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest would enter the Holy of Holies and sprinkle blood on the mercy seat—the throne of God.
   e. This act symbolized that a sacrifice of blood was necessary in order to satisfy the demands of God's justice.
   f. Propitiation is an act of satisfaction.
   g. God does not justify people by a unilateral act of forgiveness because to do so without propitiation would be a violation of His justice.
   h. Hebrews reminds us that the blood of bulls and goats cannot atone for sin.
   i. Old Testament believers were forgiven on the basis of the blood of Christ who was yet to come.

III. Redemption
   a. Christ was also sent to bring redemption.
   b. Redemption is an act of purchasing.
   c. In the Old Testament, some people would place themselves in indentured servitude in order to pay off a debt.
   d. We were redeemed out of servitude by the blood of Christ.
   e. Jesus is the supreme kinsman-redeemer, and the payment price is the blood He shed on the cross.

IV. The Curse Bearer
   a. In Galatians 3, Paul writes that Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law.
   b. The curse is the opposite of blessing.
   c. In order for the blessing promised to Abraham to be received, sin had to be punished.
d. Jesus not only takes the curse upon Himself, He becomes the curse.
e. Once Jesus had all of our sins imputed to Him He was the most loathsome sight ever in the universe.
f. God placed the curse on Jesus in order that we might not bear the curse ourselves.
g. Jesus bore the curse for a season, but the story didn’t end on Friday.

BIBLE STUDY

1. Read Isaiah 52:13–53:12 and Psalm 22, and then read the crucifixion account in Matthew 27:24–56. How do these Old Testament texts inform our understanding of what occurred on the cross?

2. Read the following Old Testament texts, noting their context. How did the crucifixion fulfill these Old Testament prophecies, and given their context, what is the significance for our understanding of the crucifixion?
   a. Psalm 69:21
   b. Ezekiel 37
   c. Amos 8:9
   d. Zechariah 14:4–5

3. Compare the taunt of Jesus in Matthew 27:40 to the temptation narrative in Matthew 4:3 and 6. Does this give us any clues about what is going on at the crucifixion?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In his lecture, Dr. Sproul said that once Jesus had all of our sins imputed to Him, He was the most loathsome sight ever in the universe. Many churches throughout history have artistically portrayed the crucifixion in almost serene tones. Regardless of your convictions concerning the appropriateness of artistic representations of the crucifixion, do you think that Christ’s bearing of sin, His becoming the curse on our behalf, and His suffering the wrath of God on the cross was purely on a spiritual level, or did he become the most loathsome sight ever in the universe?

2. The theologian Henri Blocher has written concerning the crucifixion that God here “makes the supreme crime, the murder of the only righteous person, the very operation that abolished sin.” How does this tie in to Israel’s entire history of almost uninterrupted rebellion? How does Genesis 50:20 shed light on this great mystery?

APPLICATION
1. Read and meditate on Colossians 1:13–14 today. Reflect on what it means for you that Christ accomplished all of this for you through suffering the penalty for your sin on the cross.

2. Paul decided to know nothing except Jesus Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor. 2:2). This entire study is about Jesus Christ and Him crucified, the person and work of Christ. Thank God for His amazing grace shown toward you in Christ.

SUGGESTED READING FOR FURTHER STUDY

Carson, D.A. *Scandalous: The Cross and Resurrection of Jesus.*
Hodge, A.A. *The Atonement.*
Sproul, R.C. *The Truth of the Cross.*
Resurrection

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The Jewish and Roman leaders probably breathed a sigh of relief after Jesus died on the cross. They were finally rid of this man who had exposed their evil and hypocrisy. Or so they thought. In this lecture, Dr. R.C. Sproul looks at the redemptive significance of the resurrection of Jesus, explaining how it is at the very core of the Christian faith.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To be able to explain what it means to say that Jesus was raised for our justification.
2. To be able to explain why Paul would say that if Jesus was not raised our faith is in vain.

QUOTATIONS

*Rise heart; thy Lord is risen. Sing his praise without delays,
Who takes thee by the hand, that thou likewise with him mayst rise:
That, as his death calcined thee to dust,
His life may make thee gold, and much more, just.*

—George Herbert

*He alone has fully profited in the gospel who has accustomed himself to continual meditation upon the blessed resurrection.*

—John Calvin

LECTURE OUTLINE

I. Introduction
   a. How can we speak of the resurrection as part of the work of Christ when it was an event in which He was completely passive?
b. He was raised by the power of the Holy Spirit.
c. Regarding the resurrection of Jesus, the first thing that must be observed is that He was really dead.

II. The Death of Death
   a. Paul describes the resurrection of Jesus in connection with his discussion of the two Adams.
   b. The first Adam brought death into the world, while the second Adam brings resurrection from the dead.
   c. Death, the supreme enemy is triumphed over in the resurrection.
   d. Here we see Christ as victor over Satan, sin, and death.
   e. He is not victorious over death only for Himself.
   f. God also raises up all who are in Christ.
   g. Believers participate in the triumph over death.

III. Raised by God
   a. When Lazarus was raised, he contributed nothing to it.
   b. At the command of Jesus, he came to life.
   c. The Holy Spirit raises Jesus to life.
   d. It was impossible for Jesus to remain dead since death had no claim over Him, because He was never a slave to sin.

IV. Raised for our Justification
   a. The New Testament tells us that Jesus was raised for our justification.
   b. We know how the life and death of Christ relate to our justification, but what about His resurrection?
   c. In the resurrection, the Father declares that He accepts the sacrifice of Christ.

V. The Resurrection Body
   a. Paul teaches that our bodies are sown in corruption but are raised incorruptible.
   b. There was continuity between the body of Jesus before and after the resurrection, but there was also a dramatic change.
   c. The body that came out of the tomb could never suffer decay.
   d. We don't know exactly what a glorified body looks like, but we know it is different from what our bodies are now.
   e. Christ gives us a new humanity.
   f. Christ restores the image of God in His people and prepares them to live forever.
   g. Everyone who is in Christ will share in His resurrection glory.
BIBLE STUDY

1. Read the following Old Testament texts. What glimpses of resurrection does each provide? Which texts seem to refer to individual resurrection, and which seem to speak of the national “resurrection” of Israel as a nation?
   a. Daniel 12:2–3
   b. Isaiah 26:19
   c. Hosea 6:1–2
   d. Ezekiel 37:1–14
   e. Job 19:23–27

2. The apostle Paul discusses the resurrection of believers in many places. One of the more detailed passages is 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18. According to verses 16 and 17, what will occur when Christ returns?

3. One of the two key texts on the believer’s resurrection is 2 Corinthians 4:7–5:10. How does Paul describe the present transformation of the Christian’s inner nature in 4:7–18? How does he describe the future transformation of the Christian’s body in 5:1–10?

4. The primary New Testament text on the resurrection is 1 Corinthians 15. Read this chapter and answer the following questions:
   a. What question is Paul responding to in this chapter according to verse 12?
   b. According to verses 13–19, what are the consequences of their denial of the resurrection of the dead?
   c. What is the order of resurrection, according to verse 23?
   d. What is the eschatological significance of the resurrection according to verses 24–28?
   e. What is the difference between resurrection and the mere reanimation of a corpse according to verses 35–49?
   f. How is the resurrection tied to God’s triumph over death according to verses 50–58?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. According to Paul, if Christ was not raised, the Christian faith is futile (1 Cor. 15:17–19). Why is the resurrection central to the Christian faith?

2. In 2 Timothy 2:16–19, we read of two men who declared that the resurrection had already happened. Since Jesus’ resurrection had already happened, they were clearly referring to the resurrection of believers. Why did Paul condemn this teaching so strongly?
3. Having read 1 Corinthians 15, how would you describe the continuity and discontinuity between our present bodies and the bodies we will have at the resurrection?

APPLICATION

1. The hope of the resurrection causes Christians not to grieve the way unbelievers grieve at the death of believing loved ones. Give thanks to God that He has defeated death and that we will one day be reunited with believers who have gone to be with the Lord before us.

2. Read and meditate on Revelation 21:1–4. Consider what it will be like to live forever without death, mourning, crying, or pain.

SUGGESTED READING FOR FURTHER STUDY

Davis, Stephen T. *Risen Indeed: Making Sense of the Resurrection*.
Licona, Michael R. *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach*.
Mathison, Keith A. *From Age to Age*.
Wright, N.T. *The Resurrection of the Son of God*. 
MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

Christians spend a great deal of time thinking about the birth, death, resurrection, and Second Coming of Jesus, but the ascension of Christ is often overlooked. Yet the ascension was the event that marked Christ’s enthronement, His return to glory. In this lecture, Dr. R.C. Sproul explains why the ascension of Christ is so significant.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the place of the ascension in redemptive history.
2. To be able to explain four important things that occur because of the ascension of Christ.

QUOTATIONS

*Faith has in its foundation four great cornerstones on which the building rests—the Divinity of Christ, the Incarnation, the Atonement on the Cross, the Ascension to the Throne. The last is the most wonderful, the crown of all the rest, the perfect revelation of what God has made Christ for us. And so in the Christian life it is the most important, the glorious fruit of all that goes before.*

—Andrew Murray

*The Ascension and Ascended Life bear witness against the materialistic spirit which threatens in some quarters to overpower those higher interests that have their seat in the region of the spiritual and eternal. They are as a Sursum corda—‘lift up your hearts’—which comes down from the High Priest of the Church who stands at the heavenly altar, and draws forth from the kneeling Church the answer Habemus ad Dominum—‘we lift them up unto the Lord.’*

—H. B. Swete
LECTURE OUTLINE

I. Introduction
   a. If there is any dimension of the life and work of Christ that is neglected in the church today, it is His ascension.
   b. The ascension is Christ's return to heaven after the completion of His atoning work.

II. The Ascension
   b. In the gospel account, Luke tells us that after the ascension, the disciples returned to Jerusalem with great joy.
   c. They were not happy that He was gone, but they understood where He went and why, and that was the cause for their joy.
   d. Four things occur because of the ascension of Christ, and these four things are the reason why it was to our advantage that Jesus depart.

III. Exaltation to Glory
   a. In John 17, Jesus speaks of the glory He had with the Father before the world was created and looks forward to enjoying it again.
   b. At the ascension, Jesus returns to the realm of glory.
   c. His time of humiliation was over, and He was being exalted.

IV. Pentecost
   a. Jesus also explains to His disciples that He is going away in order that He may send them another Paraclete.
   b. The original Paraclete is Jesus; the Holy Spirit is another Paraclete.
   c. The Paraclete was the name given to the family attorney in the ancient world.
   d. Parakletos is one called to stand alongside you.
   e. Jesus sends the Paraclete to give His people strength.
   f. One of the most important reasons for Jesus' ascension was that Pentecost might take place.
   g. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out on the church in order to empower it for its earthly mission.

V. The Coronation of the King
   a. A third thing that occurred at the ascension was Christ's coronation.
   b. Jesus was brought up to the right hand of the Father where He was given all authority.
   c. The kingdom of God is not something away in the future.
   d. The kingdom has begun because the King has been enthroned.
e. His seating at the right hand of the Father is referred to as His “session.”
f. Jesus is now the King of kings and Lord of lords.

VI. The Intercession of the High Priest
   a. The fourth thing that happens at the ascension is that Jesus as our High Priest enters into the heavenly Holy of Holies where He functions as our Priest-King.
   b. His chief priestly work now is the work of intercession.
   c. He is not making sacrifices in heaven.
   d. Jesus prays for those who have been given Him.
   e. He prays for our perseverance.

BIBLE STUDY

1. Read Acts 1:6–8. What are the last words spoken by Jesus before His ascension? What promise does He tell His disciples to await? What is His final commission to them? Does His final commission to them in any way act as an answer to the disciples original question in verse 6?

2. Read Acts 1:9–11.
   b. How does Luke emphasize the visibility of the ascension in verses 9–11?
   c. How does the appearance of the two men compare to the events recorded in Luke 9:30 and Luke 24:4?

3. The book of Hebrews tells us about Jesus' ministry as our great High Priest. What do each of the following texts add to our understanding of this ministry?
   b. Hebrews 5:9
   c. Hebrews 7:23–28
   d. Hebrews 8:1–13
   e. Hebrews 9:11–14
   f. Hebrews 9:23–28
   g. Hebrews 10:11–14

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Many commentators argue that Daniel 7:13–14 is a prophecy of Christ's second coming. John Calvin, on the other hand, argued that it was a prophecy of Christ's ascension. Comparing Daniel 7:13–14 with Acts 1:9–11 (the account of the ascension) and with 1 Thessalonians 4:16 (a New Testament prophecy of the second coming), which interpretation of Daniel 7 is strongest. Why?
2. Liberals and skeptics repeatedly claim that the traditional interpretation of Acts 1:9–11 necessitates the adoption of a false three-tiered understanding of the universe as well as the idea that heaven is located at some physical point somewhere in space. This objection is frequently raised in the writings of men such as Rudolf Bultmann and John Shelby Spong. But does a traditional interpretation of Acts 1:9–11 require us to believe that heaven is located somewhere in the sky above the clouds? Is heaven a different spiritual dimension of existence? If so, what reasons, didactic or otherwise, might Jesus have had for visibly ascending some distance before entering the heavenly dimension of existence?

APPLICATION

1. Read the words of the two men to the disciples in Acts 1:11. Consider what this means in terms of where you should focus your attention each day.

2. Take time today to meditate on the fact that Christ was exalted at the ascension as both King and High Priest and on what this means for you as a believer in Jesus.

SUGGESTED READING FOR FURTHER STUDY

Bunyan, John. The Intercession of Christ.
Dawson, Gerrit Scott. Jesus Ascended.
Metzger, Bruce. Historical and Literary Studies, pp. 77–87.
At the ascension of Christ, the disciples were promised that Jesus would come again, and the second coming of Christ has remained the church's blessed hope ever since. The second coming has also been the source of great controversy. In this lecture, Dr. R.C. Sproul explains some of the basic facts concerning the second coming, while at the same time dispelling some common misconceptions.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

1. To be able to explain the nature of Christ’s second coming.
2. To be able to explain the nature of the apostasy that will precede the second coming.

**QUOTATIONS**

*All sorrow which we might conceive, because of Christ’s absence, is mitigated, yea, utterly taken away, when we hear that he shall return again.*

—John Calvin

*When we think of the way in which Christ, having renewed our souls, is going to renew our bodies so that they will be like his glorious body, how he will receive us when we go forth to meet him in the air, how he will vindicate us in the final judgment, how we shall dwell with him forever in a gloriously renewed universe; and when, in addition to all this, we reflect on the fact that we had deserved none of this glory but only everlasting damnation, then, indeed, we by his grace will prepare ourselves thoroughly to meet him at his coming!*

—William Hendriksen
LECTURE OUTLINE

I. Introduction
   a. The return of Christ at the end of time will mark the consummation of his kingdom.
   b. For centuries the church has referred to the return of Jesus as the Blessed Hope.
   c. In the New Testament, “hope” refers to those promises whose fulfillment is absolutely certain.

II. The Rapture
   a. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18, Paul speaks of the second coming and of what is called the “rapture.”
   b. The rapture refers to believers being caught up in the air at His return.
   c. Jesus second coming will be visible, bodily, and triumphant.
   d. Acts 1:11 teaches that He will come just as he went—visibly and bodily.
   e. The popular dispensationalist view known as “pretribulationism” is based on a serious misunderstanding of Paul’s teaching.

III. Triumphal Return
   a. The purpose of the dead rising and the living being caught together in the air is not to go away, but to meet Jesus as He is returning.
   b. Jesus lifts us up to participate in His triumphal return.
   c. In ancient times, when a conquering king returned to Rome, the populace would go out to meet him and accompany him back into the city.
   d. The Thessalonians were worried that those who had died would miss out, but Paul assures them that the dead will get to go first.

IV. Great Apostasy
   a. In 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, Paul is correcting some misunderstandings of Christ’s coming.
   b. He tells them some things that must take place before Christ comes again.
   c. Before Christ comes there will be a great apostasy.
   d. Apostasy refers to the falling away from the truth of the gospel of those who have made a profession of faith.
   e. This cannot happen to true believers, but only to those who have made a false profession.

V. The Antichrist
   a. Paul also adds that the man of sin must be revealed.
   b. Paul is describing what we usually call the Antichrist.
   c. The Antichrist is not merely an opponent of God, but he actually seeks to usurp Christ’s office and to substitute himself for God.
d. It is usually thought that the Antichrist will be someone in the religious realm.
e. There are multitudes of lowercase “a” antichrists.
f. These all lead up to the culmination of the capital “A” Antichrist, who comes at the end.
g. The Antichrist will be destroyed by Christ at His coming.
h. We don’t look for the second coming of Christ until after the apostasy and after the coming of the Antichrist.

BIBLE STUDY

1. Read Acts 1:11. What can we learn about the nature of Christ’s second coming from this text?

2. Paul describes several events in connection with the second coming in 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18. In verse 14, Paul comforts the Thessalonians by telling them that Jesus will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep (i.e., died). How will Jesus do that according to verse 16?

3. How does 1 Corinthians 15:51–52 contribute to our understanding of what happens at the second coming?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Many Christians from the earliest centuries of the church to this day have thought they could calculate the timing of the second coming of Christ. Is this possible? Why or why not? What kind of damage can be (and has been) done by well-meaning date-setters?

2. Do most Christians in your circle of experience live and behave as if they really believe that Jesus will return? What general examples can you provide to substantiate your answer?

3. The church has always confessed its belief in the future second coming of Christ, general resurrection, and final judgment. These doctrines are incorporated into every orthodox creed and confession. Should a particular view of the millennium be placed on the same level as determinative of orthodoxy and fellowship? Why or why not?

APPLICATION

1. Consider what you can do to increase in your heart and the hearts of others a joyful longing and expectation of the return of Jesus?
2. If Jesus were to return right now, would you be ashamed? What do you need to do in order not to be ashamed?

SUGGESTED READING FOR FURTHER STUDY

Poythress, Vern S. *Understanding Dispensationalists*.
Venema, Cornelis P. *The Promise of the Future*, pp. 79–109.