Basic Christian Theology

First Baptist Church Dandridge
Dr. Justin Terrell
justin@fbcdandridge.org

The study notes from previous sessions are available at www.fbcdandridge.org/wednesday-bible-study

Christology: The Doctrine of Christ (1)

1. **The Pre-Existence of Christ**

   There are four New Testament passages that teach the pre-existence of Christ, which Akin refers to as "a quintessential quartet:" John 1:1-18, Philippians 2:5-11, Colossians 1:15-23, and Hebrews 1:1-4.

   a. **John 1:1-3** – "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.*"

      - **Point**: Since Jesus was with the Father "in the beginning," he was not a creation, but a fellow Creator. The verb "was" (*eimi*) is written in the imperfect tense, which describes a continuous action in the past. In other words, Jesus had no beginning, but continued to exist in eternity past.

      - **Quote**: "When heaven and earth were created, there was the Word of God, already existing in the closest association with God and partaking of the essence of God. No matter how far back we may try to push our imagination, we can never reach a point at which we could say of the Divine Word, as Arius did, 'There once was when He was not.'" – F.F. Bruce, The Gospel of John, 31.

   b. **Philippians 2:5-8** – "*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 emptied himself, by 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.*"

      - **Point**: The word "*form*" (*morphē*) refers to the nature of something. Therefore, Jesus has an eternal, divine nature.

2. **Old Testament Prophecies**

God did not reveal every detail of his redemptive plan in the beginning. Rather, he progressively revealed details about the Messiah and salvation throughout history. In fact, there are at least 350 prophecies that Jesus fulfilled as Messiah.

Jesus said, "*O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself*" (Luke 24:25-27; cf. John 5:39; Luke 24:44).

a. Genesis 3:15 – "*I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.*"

b. Genesis 49:9-10 – "*Judah is a lion's cub; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down; he crouched as a lion and as a lioness; who dares rouse him? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.*"

c. Deuteronomy 18:15 – "*The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen—*"

d. 2 Samuel 7:12–14 – "*When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son.*"

e. Psalm 16:10 – "F*or you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption.*" (Both Peter, Acts 2:25-28, 31, and Paul, Acts 13:35-37, interpreted and applied to text to refer to Christ's resurrection).

f. Psalm 22:14-18 – "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? I am poured out like water, all of my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death. For dogs encompass me; they have pierced my hands and feet – I can count all my bones – they stare and gloat over me; they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots*" (22:14-18; Jesus quoted 22:1 while on the cross).

g. Isaiah 7:14 – "*Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.*"

h. Isaiah 9:6-7 – "*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and*

with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this."

i. Isaiah 53:4-12 – "*Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.*"

j. Daniel 7:13-14 – "*I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.*"

k. Micah 5:2 – "*But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.*"

l. Zechariah 9:9 – "*Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.*"

3. Old Testament Appearances

Throughout the Old Testament, there are times when God makes an earthly appearance to interact with his people. Theologians refer to these appearances as a "Theophany." However, many believe that these appearances are none other than a pre-incarnate appearance of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. Therefore, these appearances are described as a "Christophany."

a. Genesis 3:8 – "*And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.*"

b. Genesis 18:1–5 – "*And the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth and said, "O Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree, while I bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant." So they said, "Do as you have said.*"

c. Genesis 32:24–30 – "*And Jacob was left alone. And a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day. When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he touched his hip socket, and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. Then he said, "Let me go, for the day has broken." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." And he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." Then he said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed." Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him. So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered.*"

d. Joshua 5:13-15 – "*When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?" And he said, "No; but I am the commander of the army of the LORD. Now I have come." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, "What does my lord say to his servant?" And the commander of the LORD's army said to Joshua, "Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.*"

e. Judges 13:2-3, 6, 17-18 – "*There was a certain man of Zorah, of the tribe of the Danites, whose name was Manoah. And his wife was barren and had no children. And the angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, "Behold, you are barren and have not borne children, but you shall conceive and bear a son…. Then the woman came and told her husband, "A man of God came to me, and his appearance was like the appearance of the angel of God, very awesome…. And Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, "What is your name, so that, when your words come true, we may honor you?" And the angel of the LORD said to him, "Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?... And Manoah said to his wife, "We shall surely die, for we have seen God.*"

f. Daniel 3:24–25 – "*Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste. He declared to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "True, O king." He answered and said, "But I see four men unbound,*

walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods."

g. The Angel of the Lord

- **Nature:** Throughout the Old Testament, a mysterious recurring figure appears known as "the Angel of the Lord." While angels are understood as God's divine messengers, and either appear as individuals or multitudes, this particular angel is often described with the definite article, "the." According to Peter Schemm, "*The Angel of the Lord*," as found in the Old Testament, refers to a mysterious messenger of God properly identified as the preincarnate Word, the second person of the Trinity…He appears in a temporary bodily form that anticipates his permanent incarnation – which is, according to Calvin, 'a prelude to the mystery which was afterwards exhibited when God was manifested in the flesh'" (Akin, 301). He is called "the angel of the Lord" not because he is a created being like all of the other angels but because of his unique status as the divine messenger or Word of God. While he is referred to as an "angel," one must not be misled to think that Christ is merely an angel, because a better translation of the word "angel" is "messenger," which describes his function, not his nature. Further, Scripture describes the "Angel of the Lord" as displaying divine attributes and authority; he is referred to as God and receives worship.

- **Names:** While "the angel of the Lord" is most common, the same figure is called "the angel of God" (Gen. 21:17), "his angel" (Gen. 24:7, 40), "my angel" (Ex. 23:23), "the angel of his presence" (Isa. 63:9), and "the messenger of the covenant" (Mal. 3:1).

- **Appearances:** The angel of the Lord appears to Hagar (Gen. 16:7-14), Abraham (Gen. 22:11-18), Eliezer (Gen. 24:7, 40), Jacob (Gen. 31:11-13), Moses (Ex. 3:1-7), Balaam (Num. 22:22-25), Joshua (Josh. 5:13-15), Gideon (Judg. 6:11-18), Manoah (Judges 13:2-22), David (2 Sam. 24:16-17), Elijah (1 Kings 19:4-8; 2 Kings 1:3-4), Hezekiah (2 Kings 19:35), Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Dan. 3:25, 28), Daniel (Dan. 6:22), Zechariah (Zech. 1:11-12; 3:1-10), and Malachi (Mal. 3:1).

h. **Group Question:** On these occasions, why would God send a pre-incarnate Jesus into the world rather than an angel like Michael or Gabriel?