Tenets of the Faith

Week 9C Life of Christ Ministry, Miracles,

Parables, Apostles, Disciples and the Bride of Christ

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1. What is it? (definition; summary of the doctrine)

**The Importance of
the Study of the Life of Christ**

1. **When we come to the Christ of the Gospels we are at the fountainhead of the New Testament and the fulfillment of much of the Old.**

David Brown has written, *The Fourfold Gospel is the central portion of Divine Revelation. Into it, as a Reservoir, all the foregoing revelations pour their full tide and out of it, as a Fountain, flow all subsequent revelations.*[[1]](#endnote-1)

*In other parts of Scripture, we hear Christ by the hearing of the ear; but here our eye seeth Him. Elsewhere we see Him through a glass darkly; but here, face to face. The orthodox Fathers of the Church well understood this peculiar feature of the Gospels and expressed it emphatically by their usages—some of them questionable, others almost childish. Nor did the heretical sects differ from them in this; the best proof of which is, that nearly all the heresies of the first four or five centuries turned upon the Person of Christ as represented in the Gospels. As to the heathen enemies of Christianity, their determined opposition was directed against the facts regarding Christ recorded in the Gospels. And it is the same still. The battle of Christianity, and with it of all Revealed Religion, must be fought on the field of the Fourfold Gospel. If its Credibility and Divine Authority cannot be made good—if we must give way to some who would despoil us of its miracles, or to others who, under the insidious name of ‘the higher criticism’ would weaken its historical claims—all Christianity is undermined and will sooner or later dissolve in our hands. But so long as the Gospels maintain their place in the enlightened convictions of the Church, as the Divine record of God manifest in the flesh, believers, reassured, will put to flight the armies of the aliens.*[[2]](#endnote-2)

Even better put are the inspired words of the apostle Paul who wrote, *For in Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together* (Colossians 1.16-17).

To put the biblical revelation together concisely, Jesus Christ is the focal point of all history. *He is the fulfillment of Old Testament hopes; He is the source of all New Testament revelation and expectation*. ***He is all in all***. To study the life of Christ is to study the fountainhead of all New Testament revelation.

1. **To relive the pages of Scripture recorded by the gospel writers is to walk with our Lord in His earthly ministry.[[3]](#endnote-3)** It is in these pages that we encounter the greatest personality of all history.
2. **To study the life of Christ is to behold God in human flesh.**
* **No gospel writer has said it more clearly or concisely than John**

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. John bore witness of Him, and cried out, saying, *This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.’” For of His fulness we have all received, and grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him* (John 1.14-18).

Throughout the Old Testament men were forbidden to attempt to represent the living God by means of graven images.[[4]](#endnote-4) The fundamental reason for such a prohibition was that no man-made image could properly reflect the majesty and perfection of the infinite God.[[5]](#endnote-5) In the Old Testament period, God was to be worshipped on the basis of His words (revelation) and works. **With the invasion of Jesus Christ into human history, man may now worship God in the person of His Son**. In that sense, Jesus Christ is the only image of God acceptable to God. He is the full disclosure, without any blemish or distortions, of God Himself. *For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form* (Colossians 2.9). If we wish to know more about God, especially as He relates to the day-to-day matters of life, we need simply learn more of Christ.

1. **When we study the life of Christ in the Gospels, we meet the *real* Jesus.**

In spite of all of the bizarre and incredible acts of men, few have been so candid as to admit that God was not on their side. It is easy to comprehend why so many have made Jesus the leading proponent of their cause. As a result, we have been bombarded with nearly every type of ‘Jesus.’ We have the *gentle* Jesus, hero of the pacifists; the *humanitarian* Jesus who is to relieve the world of suffering; the *revolutionary* Jesus hero of the anti-establishment crowd; the *broad-minded* Jesus who tolerates all; and the *mundane* Jesus Who was misled as to His identity and mission, and Who couldn’t perform miracles. (See your footnotes for expansive definitions.[[6]](#endnote-6))

Some of these views (though not all!) contain *elements* of truth. Jesus did manifest compassion and concern for the physical needs of people. But generally, even where some truth is present, there is an improper emphasis placed on one aspect of Christ’s teaching or example. Rather than seeing our Lord as a **whole person equal to and greater than the sum of His biblical portraits**, we perceive Him *only in those areas which support our own hang-ups*.

The ‘real’ Jesus is not the figment of our imagination Who comforts us in our errors and confirms our prejudices and preconceived notions. **The real Jesus is the Christ of the Gospels, the full manifestation of deity in human flesh**. It is this Jesus Whom we shall meet in the gospels. **The Jesus of our *imaginations* has little to offer, but the Jesus of biblical history is *the way, the truth, and the life*** (John 14.6).

1. **The life of Christ confronts us with a personality which forbids indecision and neutrality.**

**The unreal Jesus, who is the product of human imagination, is not a very commanding figure**. At best He requires a mere ‘tip of the hat’ or a few words of polite praise**. Men can easily sidestep commitment to the Jesus which men have reshaped into their own image. But the real Jesus leaves man no such option. His life and teaching demands decisive decision. He was either God or He was not.** If He was not God’s Messiah, He was either a deceiver or self-deluded. In John chapter 7, we see just one instance of the way Christ divided men. The reactions of men were decisive and extreme. They were either willing to die for Him or that He should die*.*[[7]](#endnote-7)

Those who resist Christ are as zealous about it as those who receive Him as Savior. **To face the person and the work of Christ in the gospels is to forever leave the middle ground of neutrality and non-commitment.[[8]](#endnote-8)**

1. **When we study the life of Christ we learn of God’s pattern and provision for our Christian experience.**

T. W. Manson once wrote, *To the two questions: What does God offer to man? and What does God require of man? the New Testament returns one answer: the life of Christ*.[[9]](#endnote-9)

* First and foremost, the Lord Jesus Christ is God’s provision for man’s sin. Jesus Christ died in the sinner’s place. He Who was sinless took man’s sin upon Himself and suffered the penalty of God’s wrath for all who believe (2 Corinthians 5.21).
* He provides every believer with His righteousness so that we may spend eternity in fellowship with God (Romans 3.21-26).
* But in addition to this He is the example, He is the standard of righteousness for all who believe. The trials and tests which we face are not unknown to Him, for He was tempted in all points, yet without sin (Hebrews 4.15).
* His life is the pattern for Christian conduct (1 Peter 2.21).
* Thank God Jesus Christ is not only the standard of righteousness, He is also the source of it. He is both the pattern and the provision for the Christian walk. It was the death of Christ which saved us from sin in the past; it is the life of Christ which delivers us from sin in the present and future.

Paul wrote in Romans chapter 5: *Much more, then, having been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life* (Rom. 5.9,10).

Again in Romans chapter 6 we are told: *Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection* (Romans 6.4,5).

The teaching of the New Testament is that the Christian life is one in which Jesus Christ lives His life out in us. Orthodox Christians have taught much on the death of Christ, but we have not given sufficient emphasis to the life of Christ. It is in this study of the life of Christ that we shall learn more of our Lord as the pattern and as the provision for Christian living.

Today many, many false teachers have come into the Church that teach that Christ was sent to earth to simply *model* the life which it is possible for us to live. Again, we need to be reminded that Jesus Christ is not only our *example* of *how to live,* but it is only through His power and in His righteousness that we are able to follow that example. *He is not just the* ***pattern;*** *but the* ***provision.*** *For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.* (Philippians 2.13)

1. **Further, the study of the life and teachings of Christ is foundational to a proper understanding of the dispensational distinctions between God’s program for Israel in the Old Testament, and His program for Gentiles in the New.[[10]](#endnote-10)**
2. **Jesus Christ is the determining factor between life and death, heaven and hell.**

...Many people sincerely believe that God has provided many ways to Heaven. Some [believe they] will enter God’s heaven, we are told, by faith in Buddha, others by good works, still others by the way of Islam. **If man were responsible for such matters**, this might be the case. But **Jesus Christ is unique in that He makes an exclusive claim to be God’s own provision for eternal life. Jesus said to him, *I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me*** (John 14.6).

Such is the teaching of Peter, *And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved* (Acts 4.12).

With Peter, John agrees: *He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God* (John 3.18).

Jesus Christ is the most important person in all of recorded history. When you stand before the judgment bar of God, God will not ask you what church you joined, or how many attendance buttons you earned, or how much money you gave, or whether or not you were baptized. God will ask you but one question, “What have you done about My Son, Jesus?” Have you trusted in Him as your Savior? Do you believe He died for your sins? Are you resting in His righteousness for God’s approval? To have Him, is to have eternal life. *He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life* (1 John 5.12).[[11]](#endnote-11)

**Who is Jesus?[[12]](#endnote-12)**

Jesus once asked the question of his disciples, “Who do people say that I am” and after some answers he quickly followed with a second more important question, “But who do you say that I am.” (Matt 16.13-15). This is life’s greatest question and our whole eternity is hinging on the correct response. C.S. Lewis once stated: *A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic – on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg – or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to*.[[13]](#endnote-13) [[14]](#endnote-14)

The study of who Jesus Christ is and what he did is something that deserves our lifelong pursuit until as Paul says we see him face to face (1 Corinthians 13.12). The study of Christ is referred to as *Christology*. The study of Christ starts from his preexistence, to his future return and earthly reign.

**The Eternality and Preexistence of Christ**

The books of Isaiah and John sum it up pretty well, and the Scriptures are in your footnotes.[[15]](#endnote-15) In summary, Jesus not only existed prior to his birth, but he also existed from all eternity past. This means that Jesus was not a created being but rather eternal God.

**Christ in the Old Testament**

Since Jesus Christ did exist prior to his birth and is the promised Messiah, then a question one could ask is how and where he is seen in the Old Testament. A very important testimony regarding Christ in the Old Testament can be found spoken by Jesus himself in the gospel of Luke. *Then he [Jesus] said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled* (Luke 24.44). The reference to the Law, Prophets and Psalms is a reference to the threefold division of the Old Testament canon sometimes referred to as the Tanakh.[[16]](#endnote-16) We should expect to find Christ in all the sections of the Old Testament. Besides general designations for God, there are three primary ways that Christ can be seen in the Old Testament: direct prophecy, typological prophecy, and what is called theophanies or Christophanies. More on that in your footnotes.[[17]](#endnote-17)

**The Incarnation of Christ**

What does the incarnation refer to? In short the word means “in flesh” and it refers to God, who is spirit, taking the form of human flesh. A more precise theological definition would be that the incarnation *defines the act wherein the eternal God, the Son took to Himself an additional nature, humanity, through the virgin birth*.[[18]](#endnote-18) One of the main biblical passages on the incarnation is from John 1.14: *Now the Word became flesh and took up residence among us*. Another important passage is from Paul, “Christ Jesus . . . who though he existed in the form of God did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped but emptied himself by taking on the form of a slave, by looking like other men, and by sharing in human nature (Philippians 2.6-7). This emptying was not emptying Jesus of his deity, rather it was the adding of his human nature into a humble situation to even death on a cross. C. S. Lewis well-articulated, *The Son of God became the Son of Man so that the sons of men might become the sons of God*.

**The Humanity of Christ**

The result of the incarnation was that the preexistent Christ became a man, and as such Jesus experienced the realm of humanity. Luke emphasizes this when he says, *And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom, and the favor of God was upon him* (Luke 2.40). Jesus had the title of Son of Man (Matthew 8.20) which was the most common way he referred to himself. He had the human lineage of son of Abraham and David (Matthew 1.1). As a man Jesus was: hungry (Matthew 4.2); thirsty (John 19.28); grew tired (John 4.6); grieved to the point of tears (John 11.35); tempted (Matthew 4.1); experienced physical death (Luke 23.46). In short he was a man and he experienced humanity to the full. He was one of us. The only qualification one would have to make regarding Jesus’ humanity is that while he came in the *flesh* he came only in the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom 8.3), and that while he was tempted in all things as we are, he was without sin (Heb 4.15). At the same time, sin is not an essential part of humanity the way God created man. After God created Adam and Eve, they were perfectly and fully human and God declared it good. God even stated it was very good prior to the sin that led to man’s fall (Gen 1.31; Gen 3). In the first and second century A.D., there was a heretical movement known as Gnosticism which denied that God who is good could take on an actual human body which they thought was sinful. In essence, they were deniers of the doctrine of the incarnation (cf. 1 John 4.2).[[19]](#endnote-19)

**The Deity of Christ**

Jesus is not only presented in the Bible as a man but he is also presented as having the nature of God. He has a unique identity with the Father. Jesus stated, *The Father and I are one* (John 10.30) and *the person who has seen me has seen the Father* (John 14.9). We went over this in Lesson 3, and I will put a few more notes in your footnotes.[[20]](#endnote-20)

**The Roles of Jesus**

While this is most certainly too simplistic, it is nonetheless helpful that Jesus is sometimes described as *prophet* (first advent ministry), *priest* (death on the cross and current ministry) and *king* (his rule now from heaven and in the future on earth). The earthly ministry of Jesus can be divided into two major activities: his Words, and His works. He called people to repentance and associated with sinners (Matthew 4.17; Mark 2.16); He identified with humanity (Matt 1.23); He rebuked hypocritical religion (Matthew 23); He gave sermons (like the Sermon on the Mount; cf. Matthew 5-7); He drew lessons from life (such as parables; cf. Matthew 13), He gave prophecies about the future (Matthew 24); He selected, trained and commissioned the 12 (Matthew 4.18-22); He did miracles (Matthew 8-9); He revealed the Father (John 17) and so much more.

**The Passion of Christ**

About *one third* of the gospels cover the last week of Jesus’ life. This shows the importance of these final events in Jesus’ earthly life to the gospel writers. Jesus clearly stated the reason for his coming: “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10.25). There is a chronology of the last week of Jesus’ life in your footnotes.[[21]](#endnote-21)

**The Resurrection of and Ascension of Christ**

The empty tomb that was guarded and sealed continues to be one of the strongest proofs of Jesus’ resurrection. After 40 days of being with the disciples, Jesus was taken up into heaven from the Mount of Olives. This is referred to as the ascension. We went through this in detail in Week 6.[[22]](#endnote-22)

**The Current Ministry of Christ and the Second Advent**

While many studies about Jesus focus on what he did at his first coming or even what he will do at his second advent, Jesus is not inactive in the present age. He has a current role and ministry:

* Christ is the head of the body directing the activities of the church. Paul teaches, *He [Jesus] is the head of the body, the church* (Colossians 1.18).
* Also, Christ as High Priest intercedes in prayer on our behalf. The author of Hebrews states, *So he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them* (Hebrews 7.25). What a wonderful proclamation about Jesus praying for us which keeps us... in God’s omnipotent grip. One author stated: *If I could hear Christ praying for me in the next room, I would not fear a million enemies. Yet the distance makes no difference; He is praying for me*.[[23]](#endnote-23)

The second coming of Jesus Christ can be divided into two major parts. The first is the coming in blessing for the church, which is referred to as the rapture, which we just covered. The word rapture means *caught up*.[[24]](#endnote-24)

The second phase is the coming in judgment for the world and the rule of Jesus on the earth. John writes, *Then I saw heaven opened and here came a white horse! The one riding it was called ‘Faithful’ and ‘True,’ and with justice he judges and goes to war* (Revelation 19.11). After Jesus comes back to earth Jesus Himself said in Matthew: *When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne* (Matthew 25.31).

**Summary**

Amazing! Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Lord, the Savior, the Alpha and Omega, the Son of Man, the Son of God, the Son of David, the Word, the Good Shepherd, the Lamb of God, the Bread of Life, the light of the World, Judge, Prophet, Priest, King, Kings of Kings and Lord of Lords and much more. As John states if everything that Jesus said and did were recorded there would not be enough books in the world to contain it (John 21.25).[[25]](#endnote-25)

**The Harmony of the Gospels**

**The life of Christ** reveals that Jesus was and is God because of His miracles, wonders, teachings, His very unusual life, His crucifixion, resurrection and ascension back to heaven. The life of Christ is like none other. It is recorded in the four gospels of the New Testament and each one emphasizes a different aspect.

* For example, the gospel of John tells us that the things Christ did demonstrate that He is the Son of God or God Himself.

 *...these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.* John 20.31 (NASB)

* The gospel of Luke records the life of Christ in chronological order.

*...having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.* Luke 1.1-4 (NASB)

* The gospel of Matthew reveals that Jesus Christ was and is the Messiah. (Matthew 1.1)
* The gospel of Mark reveals Jesus as the suffering servant—He died to ransom us (Mark 10.45).[[26]](#endnote-26)

If only one gospel in the New Testament is studied, we will miss many events of the life of Christ.

Therefore, we want to weave all four gospels together in chronological order so that we will not miss anything that is recorded about the life of Christ. This is called a harmony of the gospels.[[27]](#endnote-27)

I have included a chart in your footnotes showing verses common to each of the gospels, and your handouts will give you outlines, chronology of Christ’s ministry, and a few other study helps.[[28]](#endnote-28)

**The Disciples and Apostles of Christ**

**12 disciples/apostles[[29]](#endnote-29)**

1. Peter
2. Andrew
3. James
4. John
5. Philip
6. Bartholomew or Nathanael
7. Thomas Didymus
8. Matthew or Levi
9. James, the Lesser or Younger
10. Jude or Thaddeus
11. Simon the Zealot
12. Judas

(See Matthew 10.1-4 and Luke 6.12-16.)

The original twelve disciples/apostles are listed in Matthew 10.2–4, *These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew;*

*Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Him.* The Bible also lists the twelve disciples/apostles in Mark 3.16–19 and Luke 6.13–16. A comparison of the three passages shows a couple of minor differences in the names. It seems that Thaddaeus was also known as *Judas, son of James* (Luke 6.16) and Lebbaeus (Matthew 10.3). Simon the Zealot was also known as Simon the Canaanite (Mark 3.18). The Gospel of John uses the name *Nathanael* instead of *Bartholomew*, but Nathanael and Bartholomew were undoubtedly the same person. Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus, was replaced as one of the twelve apostles by Matthias (see Acts 1.15–26). Some Bible teachers view Matthias as an *invalid* choice because it appears that instead of waiting in the upper room, the disciples/apostles had made undue criteria for whom to *appoint* to “replace” Judas and *lots were cast* and Matthias was chosen, but he is never heard about again. A few chapters later, we see that Paul was God’s choice to replace Judas Iscariot as the twelfth apostle.

**The Miracles of Christ**

**The Meaning of the Miracles** (Mark 4.35-41)[[30]](#endnote-30)

The miracles [of Christ] are an integral part of our Lord’s ministry. They not only authenticate His message; they are a vital part of it.[[31]](#endnote-31)

We have been studying highlights in the Life and Ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. We... are now considering the presentation of Jesus as the Messiah, the Savior of the world. The miracles of our Lord are an essential part of that presentation, for, in part, they authenticate His claim as Messiah.

**The Terms Employed**

The miraculous works of our Lord Jesus were communicated by the use of three primary terms, each of which accentuated one particular facet of the supernatural activity of Christ. These three terms are found together in several passages. *Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know* (Acts 2.22, cf. also 2 Corinthians 12.12; 2 Thessalonians 2.9).

The term ‘miracle’ (*dunamis*) emphasizes the mighty work that has been done, and, in particular, the power by which it was accomplished. The event is described in terms of the power of God in action.

If ‘miracle’ emphasizes the cause of the miraculous event, ‘wonder’ (*teras*) , underscores its effect on those who are witnesses. On many occasions, the crowds (even the disciples) were amazed and astonished by the works of our Lord (e.g. Mark 2.12; 4.41; 6.51, etc.). Origen pointed out long ago that this term ‘wonder’ is never employed alone in the New Testament, but always in conjunction with some other term which suggests something far greater than a mere spectacle.[[32]](#endnote-32)

The weightiest term used with reference to the miracles of our Lord is ‘sign’ (semeion), which focuses upon the deeper meaning of the miracle.[[33]](#endnote-33) A sign is a miracle which conveys a truth about our Lord Jesus. A miracle is usually a sign, but a sign need not always be a miracle (cf. Luke 2.12).

The miracles of our Lord are at one and the same time a visible manifestation of divine power (miracle) an awe-inspiring spectacle (wonder), and an instructive revelation about God (sign).[[34]](#endnote-34)

**Classification of the Miracles**

Perhaps the most common classification of the miracles of our Lord is into three categories: (1) those which pertain to nature; (2) those which pertain to man; and, (3) those which pertain to the spirit world.[[35]](#endnote-35)

I find it helpful to distinguish between what can be called ‘Class A’ and ‘Class B’ miracles. ‘Class A’ miracles overrule or transcend the laws of nature. Such would be the case of our Lord’s walking on the water (Mark 6.45-52). Here the law of gravity was overruled. ‘Class B’ miracles do not overtly violate natural laws. For example, the stilling of the storm did not appear to violate any natural law. Storms on this lake, we are told, stopped as quickly as they commenced. The fact that it stopped at the time of our Lord’s rebuke is evidence of His sovereignty over nature. ‘Class B’ miracles would be viewed by unbelievers as mere coincidence. ‘Class A’ miracles, such as the raising of Lazarus were an outright affront to natural laws and processes (thus the statement, ‘he stinks’ in John 11.39, stressing the normal course of nature). Both categories, ‘Class A’ and ‘Class B,’ are miracles, but ‘Class A’ miracles are more undeniably so to the skeptic.

**Characteristics of the Miracles of Our Lord**

Miraculous deeds were not unknown to the age in which our Lord revealed Himself to men. But the miracles which He accomplished were far different than those claimed by other religions. For a few moments, we shall attempt to characterize the miracles of our Lord:[[36]](#endnote-36)

* 1. They were truly historical. In the Gospel accounts, the writers have not presented the miracles of our Lord as anything other than actual events. They are not true myths, mythical stories with ‘spiritual lessons,’ **but real events conveying spiritual truths**. The miracles of other religions are far more mythical in nature. Though perhaps not precisely stated, we can sense a kind of ‘once upon a time’ mood. Not so in the Gospels.
	2. They were reasonable. The miracles of the *Apocryphal* Gospels are fantastic and questionable.[[37]](#endnote-37) They are completely out of character, with Jesus arbitrarily and capriciously using His supernatural powers. In contrast, the accepted and more established and credentialed Gospels show a highly ethical use of His power, in a way totally consistent with His person.
	3. They were useful. Almost every miracle of our Lord was designed to meet a physical need. Our Lord refused to employ His powers to satisfy His own appetites, or to ensure His protection. He turned down every invitation to do the miraculous to satisfy idle curiosity (cf. Luke 23.8).
	4. They were accomplished openly. The miracles were performed in the most public situations, not oft in a dark corner. While so many alleged ‘miracles’ of today defy documentation, those of our Lord were mainly public.
	5. They were accomplished simply. Others who claimed to be ‘miracle workers’ always operated with a great deal of ritual and ceremony. A ‘miracle’ was an extravaganza, a carrying-on with pomp and circumstance. Our Lord most often merely spoke a word, and at times performed His miraculous deeds at a distance (cf. Matthew 8.5-13).
	6. They were accomplished instantly. With very few exceptions, the miracles of Jesus were completed instantly and completely.
	7. They were accomplished in a variety of circumstances. While some could do their deeds only under the most controlled environment, Jesus did His works under a great variety of circumstances. His powers were demonstrated over nature, over sickness and disease, and over the forces of Satan. The sicknesses He healed were of amazing variety.[[38]](#endnote-38)
	8. They were accomplished on the basis of faith. The miracles of the Gospels were accomplished on the basis of faith, either that of our Lord (cf. John 11.41-43), or of the one cured (cf. Mark 5.34), or of others who are concerned (cf. Matthew 8.10, Mark 2.5). Where there was little faith, little was accomplished (cf. Mark 6.5,6).
	9. They were gratuitous. While in the cults a fee of payments was expected, the miracles of our Lord were free of charge. No fee was expected or accepted. Our Lord’s ministry, from start to finish, was one of grace.
	10. They were free from retaliation. With the possible exception of the cursing of the fig tree (Mark 11.12-14) none of the miracles of Jesus were of a punitive or negative variety. This is in contrast, not only to the desires of his own disciples (Luke 9.52-56), but also the practices of other ‘healers’ of His day, and even of what often occurred in the Old Testament.[[39]](#endnote-39)
	11. They were eschatological. The miracles of Jesus were evidence of the dawn of a new age. With the presentation of Jesus as Messiah, a new age had begun. He had come to restore man from his fallen state, and creation from the chaos resulting from sin. He had come to restore and to save. Man had been placed on the earth to rule over it. When the last Adam (Jesus Christ) came nature immediately recognized its master. When our Lord confronted sickness and disease, He mastered it. He came to save, and thus the word often used for healing was ‘to save.’[[40]](#endnote-40)

**The Purpose of the Miracles**

Several purposes emerge from the Scriptures for the exercise of miracles by our Lord.

1. They attracted men. Though not the primary thrust of our Lord’s miraculous ministry, one outcome was that His miracles attracted men and women who were anxious to hear His message. To many, His deeds were at least those of a prophet (cf. John 3.2; 4.19). Here was a man with a message from God. Our Lord made many attempts to avoid the spectacular and to avoid arousing misdirected Messianic hopes (Matthew 8.4; 12.16; 16.20, etc.). But we must also recall that it was the miraculous healing ministry of Jesus which drew the multitudes to the place where the Sermon on the Mount was delivered (Matthew 4.24-25).
2. They accredited Jesus. It was expected that when Messiah came He would be accredited by miracles. When our Lord presented Himself at the synagogue in Nazareth, He quoted a passage from Isaiah chapter 61:

*And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book, and found the place where it was written, ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord* (Luke 4.17-19) .

The people expected Messiah to present Himself by signs (John 7.31). Our Lord’s power over demons demonstrates the coming of the Kingdom: *But if I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you* (Luke 11.20). By reason of His work alone, men should receive Him as Messiah (John 10.37-38).

1. They reveal God. As we have previously noted, the miracles of Jesus were not merely deeds to authenticate the message of Messiah, but a vital part of that message. The miracles not only revealed the power of God, **but His person**. In the miracles of Jesus, we see the sympathy and compassion of God. **Jesus was deeply moved by human suffering and need** (cf. John 11.35). These needs prompted Him to action. Again, the miracles reveal Jesus to be the Redeemer and Restorer of a fallen universe. He came to save.

1. David Brown, *The Four Gospels* (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1969), p. iii. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Ibid, pp. iii, iv [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. There is much interest these days in *walking where Jesus walked* by visiting *the Holy Land*. But far greater is the privilege which every Christian does have to walk the dusty roads of the Holy Land with our Lord Jesus through the eyes of the inspired Gospel writers. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Exodus 20.4-5 [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. For a fuller and more thought-provoking discussion of the Second Commandment, cf. J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press), pp. 38-44. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. * There is the gentle Jesus, hero of the pacifist cause. This is the Jesus meek and mild who instructs us to turn the other cheek, even as he submitted, non-violently, to the abuse of men.
	* Then we have the humanitarian Jesus. He is the Jesus whose high calling was to relieve the world of misery and suffering. Just as he devoted Himself to battle suffering, pain and misery, so must we.
	* On the opposite side of the spectrum, there is Jesus the revolutionary. Here is the hero of the anti-establishment movement. Just as this Jesus rocked the boat of the status quo, so should we. Just as He, they allege, sought to overthrow corrupt and unjust institutions of His day (even by use of violence), so should we.
	* There is also the broad-minded Jesus, whose love (we are told) seems to permit, or at least tolerate, the sins defined by ‘wooden literalists,’ ‘fundamentalists,’ and other narrow-minded bigots. He would welcome women into positions of church leadership as well as homosexuals. He would take a more tolerant view of divorce, sexual morality and such.
	* The liberals would introduce us to the misled and mundane Jesus. This individual, from what little truth we could ferret from the ‘mythical’ accounts of the gospels, was one who was misled as to His true identity and mission, and who surely could have performed no miracles. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. As R. T. France has so well said it, *Those who understand who Jesus is and what he stands for are still today given to extreme reactions … It is only those who do not understand who can be indifferent and dismiss Jesus with a well-meant but patronizing word of praise.* R. T. France, *I Came to Set the Earth on Fire: A Portrait of Jesus* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1976), p. 15. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. [When] you are confronted with the person of Jesus Christ in [His Word], you will be compelled by the sheer weight of the evidence to the kind of commitment some would call fanatical. If so, you would be in the company of many who beheld Him in the flesh, and multitudes more who have believed yet have not seen, save through the eyes of faith and the testimony of those among whom He tabernacled. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. T. W. Manson, as quoted by Harrison, *A Short Life of Christ*, p. 11. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Even a casual reading of the Old Testament leaves us with the impression of incompleteness. That which God had promised, that for which Israel hoped, had not yet been fulfilled. Israel awaited the literal fulfillment of God’s promise both of a king who would reign eternally with peace and glory for the nation and anxiously awaited the coming Messiah and His reign.

Yet when we turn to the epistles of the New Testament, little is said of this kingdom. And more puzzling yet, God’s interest and activity seems focused upon the Gentiles more than the Jews. We read much about the church and little about Israel. Some have understood this transition to mean that God will fulfill His promises to the nation Israel through the church and that Israel as a nation has no literal earthly kingdom to which she can look forward.

But the Apostle Paul explained in Romans chapters 9-11 that although God’s purposes for Israel have been temporarily postponed, they are still certain, for Israel’s unbelief is neither total nor permanent (cf. especially 11:25-32). God will literally fulfill His promises to His people.

Our study of the life of Christ will help us understand just why this delay has occurred. First of all, we can now look back upon the Old Testament prophecies and discern two distinct lines of prophecy. One line predicted the first coming of Messiah as the suffering Savior, Who would forever put away the sins of His people by His death on the cross (cf. Psalm 22; Isaiah 52.13–53.12). The other line of prophecy foretold the kingdom that Messiah would establish after atonement had been made for His people (cf. Isaiah 9.6-7; Daniel 7.13-14).

These two comings of Messiah were not perceived by Old Testament saints. We now understand because of the gospel accounts and their explanation by the Apostle Paul. When the Lord Jesus Christ presented Himself to the nation Israel, He did so as their promised Messiah. In Luke chapter 4, He presented Himself as the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy (Isa. 61.1-2). By His works, He validated His power and authority to make such a claim. By His teaching, He revealed that true nature of His kingdom.

Most Israelites had a different kind of Messiah in mind, and a different concept of the kingdom. Consequently, they began to withdraw from Him and Jewish leadership quickly began to resist Him as a real threat to their aspirations.

None of this caught our Lord by surprise, for the Messiah must first suffer before He could reign. Our Lord began to withdraw from ministry to the masses and pour His life into His disciples. He began to teach the crowds in the veiled language of parables and to explain in detail only to His intimate followers and friends. He began to speak less of His earthly kingdom and more of His interim program for the church. He dealt less with Jews and more with Gentiles. Our Lord began to more openly and aggressively attack the Jewish leaders, showing their error and provoking their anger. He strategically retreated when things became prematurely volatile. He literally engineered His own death by the hands of His opponents.

All of this, as Paul makes clear in Romans 9-11, was a part of God’s marvelous master design to save both Jews and Gentiles. Jewish unbelief and rebellion brought about the death of Christ for the sins of men, whether Jew or Gentile. It also made possible the proclamation of the gospel to the Gentiles. In God’s program for the church, He saves Jews and Gentiles precisely the same way He has always saved men, by faith in Christ. It is not the Gentiles who must be saved by becoming Jews (and thereby submitting to circumcision, self-baptism, and the Law), but the Jew who must enter by the door the Gentile Christians have passed through, the door of faith.

The life of Christ, then, records the authentication of Jesus Christ as Israel’s Messiah, His presentation of Himself, and His rejection by His own people. All of this fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies concerning Messiah. Israel’s rejection of Messiah (not only by putting Jesus to death, but by rejecting the apostolic presentation of the gospel after His resurrection) necessitated the parenthetical church age in which we live. For this we Gentile Christians can greatly rejoice, for it has meant our salvation. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. **The Approach of The Study of the Life of Christ**

How do you approach the study of the life of Christ? Some have endeavored to deal with the subject chronologically, but there is little agreement on such matters, for chronology was not a great concern to the gospel writers. Others have approached the gospels harmonistically. Such a study seeks to look at the life of Christ through the eyes of the gospel writers collectively. There is great value to such a study, but this would necessitate a lengthy analysis of the gospels. In this brief study we will deal with the major events in the life of our Lord, expounding (generally) the passage that most fully depicts that event. We will begin with the crucial events at the birth of our Lord and the early parts of His ministry. Then we will deal with some of the more prominent themes of His teaching. Here I follow the approach of R. T. France in his excellent little book, *I Came to Set the Earth on Fire: A Portrait of Jesus* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1976), as defended on pages 44-45. Finally, we will return to a more chronological approach toward the end of our Lord’s earthly ministry, focusing upon His last week of ministry. May God use this study to enable us to know Him more intimately and to serve Him more devotedly. Taken from: HIGHLIGHTS IN THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST:

https://bible.org/seriespage/introduction-life-and-ministry-jesus-christ [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. FROM THE SERIES: CORE FAITH: UNDERSTANDING THE ESSENTIALS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE,

https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-7-study-christ#\_ftnref4

See also https://bible.org/series/highlights-life-and-ministry-jesus-christ [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: The McMillian Company, 1952), 58. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. The dreary life Napoleon Bonaparte led on St. Helena while imprisoned at the end of his life gave him time to turn his mind to God. He once commented to a young doctor who laughed at his growing devotion to religion, “Young man! You are perhaps too clever to believe in God; I am not so advanced as that. Not all can be atheists.” The will he wrote on St. Helena opened with strange words for a man who, most of his life, had called himself a Deist: “I die in the bosom of the Apostolic and Roman Church.” In his will, Napoleon said he wanted to be buried according to the rites of the Catholic Church. Although he desired to be reconciled to the Roman Catholic Church which he left 50+ years prior, his statements about Jesus Christ and Who He is gives hope that his true reconciliation was with the Son of God and Lord of Lords.

At six in the evening on Saturday, May 5, 1821, Napoleon Bonaparte silently passed from this life. ...And at the side of the body that had been Napoleon, they laid his sword. But on the breast, they placed a crucifix. https://www.catholictextbookproject.com/post/napoleon-reconciled-with-god-may-5-1821

Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821) was, by all accounts, a giant of history. Soldier. General. Emperor. Exile. And although no would add ‘theologian’ to this list, Napoleon faced a question common to all mankind: Who is Jesus Christ?

History has seen many different answers. Christians have claimed Him as Savior, others have considered Him just another wise teacher, and skeptics have deemed Him to be a largely mythological figure. Near the end of his life, the exiled Emperor Napoleon had a conversation with one of his generals about the deity of Christ. General Bertrand said, “I cannot conceive, sire, how a great man like you can believe that the Supreme Being ever exhibited himself to men under a human form, with a body, a face, mouth, and eyes. Let Jesus be whatever you please – the highest intelligence, the purest heart, the most profound legislator, and, in all respects, the most singular being who has ever existed – I grant it. Still, he was simply a man, who taught his disciples, and deluded credulous people, as did Orpheus, Confucius, Brama.”

**To this Napoleon responded by saying:**

“I know men, and I tell you Jesus Christ was not a man. Superficial minds see a resemblance between Christ and the founders of empires and the gods of other religions. That resemblance does not exist. There is between Christianity and other religions the distance of infinity. Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne and myself founded empires. But on what did we rest the creations of our genius? Upon sheer force. Jesus Christ alone founded His empire upon love; and at this hour millions of men will die for Him. In every other existence but that of Christ how many imperfections! From the first day to the last He is the same; majestic and simple; infinitely firm and infinitely gentle. He proposes to our faith a series of mysteries and commands with authority that we should believe them, giving no other reason than those tremendous words, ‘I am God.’”

**Referring to other so-called gods that have been worshipped by man, Napoleon said:**

“Nothing announces them divine. On the contrary, there are numerous resemblances between them and myself, foibles and errors which ally them to me and to humanity. It is not so with Christ. Everything in Him astonishes me. His spirit overawes me, and his will confounds me. Between Him and whoever else in the world, there is no possible term of comparison. He is truly a being by Himself. His ideas and His sentiments, the truths which He announces, His manner of convincing, are not explained either by human organization of by the nature of things. The Bible contains a complete series of acts and of historical men to explain time and eternity, such as no other religion has to offer. If it is not the true religion, one is very excusable in being deceived; for everything in it is grand and worthy of God. I search in vain in history to find the similar to Jesus Christ, or anything which can approach the Gospel. Neither history, nor humanity, nor the ages, nor nature can offer me anything with which I am able to compare it or explain it. Here everything is extraordinary. The more I consider the Gospel, the more I am assured that there is nothing there which is not beyond the march of events and above the human mind. Even the impious themselves have never dared to deny the sublimity of the Gospel, which inspires them with a sort of compulsory veneration. What happiness that Book procures for those who believe it!”

https://reasonabletheology.org/napoleon-bonapartes-view-of-jesus/.

See also https://history.stackexchange.com/questions/7560/are-these-remarks-by-napoleon-on-jesus-genuine

Notes: Beauterne's source was never claimed to be either Napoleon or Bertrand, but Montholon (see the book as per link provided by @FelixGoldberg, or the sub-title given by Abbot to his citation from *Sentiment de Napoléon sur le Christianisme: conversations religieuses, recueillies à Sainte Hélène* **par M. le General Comte de Montholon**).

Thus Cronin's normally weighty opinion seems here not pertinent to authenticity considerations. The quote supplied by @Varrin Swearingen is a further excellent attestation to their authenticity–Montholon clearly stood by them, and Cronin's accusation of fabricating Napoleon quotes ought to have been aimed at him.

I had always wondered how Montholon managed to remember and recall Napoleon's sayings, but I think this expresses the reason for the clear and substantial recall well:

General Montholon, after his return to Europe, said to M. de Beauterne: “...I have seen it, yes, I have seen it; and I, a man of camps, who had forgotten my religion—I confess it—who did not practice it, I at first was astonished; but then I received thoughts and impressions which still continue with me the subjects of profound reflection. I have seen the Emperor religious, and I have said to myself, ‘He died a Christian, in the fear of God.’ I can not forget that old age is upon me, that I must soon die, and I wish to die like the Emperor. I do not doubt even that General Bertrand often recalls, as I do, the religious conversations and the death of the Emperor. The General, perhaps, may finish his career like his master and his friend.”

[Reading the John Abbot chapter in full you will note Montholon also kept a journal of his time there, which would further account for the clarity of his recall.]

The sentiments on Christianity, extensive and thorough as they are, demonstrate a learned mind of the very first rank applied with considerable profundity to Christ and his religion, showing him to be thoroughly and deeply convinced, then trying deeply and thoroughly to convince a dear friend, in this case General Bertrand. That such an intense discussion created a lasting impression on Montholon (who was present) can hardly be surprising, Napoleon was after all, a magnetic personality of enormous charisma.

Since Bertrand is portrayed as the key contender against Napoleon in the great discussion that occurred, one would imagine he both could and would have publicly contested such a record if it were not in essence true - as an avowed atheist he certainly had the incentive to do so (he did not die till 1844).

To supplement my answer still further, having just read the French Wikipedia entry for Robert-Augustin Antoine de Beauterne (translated helpfully by Google!), I find these 'sentiments on Christianity' were first published (in essence) in 1837 and according to this French entry:

There was no dispute in the 1830s and 1840s... when many witnesses and protagonists of those years of exile were still alive. https://history.stackexchange.com/questions/7560/are-these-remarks-by-napoleon-on-jesus-genuine [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. The eternality of the Messiah was stated as early as in the Old Testament book of Isaiah. Isaiah 9.6 reads: “For a child has been born to us a son has been given to us. He shoulders responsibility and is called:..., ***Everlasting Father***(cf. Micah 5.2).Here the *son* to be born is described as the *Everlasting Father*. But how can a son be *everlasting* and how can he be father? Clearly, something unique is being said about this promised son. This son is identified in the New Testament as Jesus Christ (Isaiah 7.14; Matthew 1.23).

Also, John points to the preexistence of the Word who became flesh at the outset of his gospel where he states, *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was fully God. The Word was with God in the beginning...* The Word became flesh (John 1.1-2, 14). The *Word* clearly refers to Jesus Christ.

John the Baptist also gives testimony about Jesus’ preexistence: *On the next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, ‘Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is the one about whom I said, After me comes a man who is greater than I am, because he existed before me’* (John 1.29-30). Even though John the Baptist was older than Jesus, John states that he existed before him. Lastly, in a conversation with his fellow Jews Jesus gave testimony himself about his preexistence prior to His birth. *The Judeans replied, ‘You are not yet fifty years old! Have you seen Abraham?’ Jesus said to them, ‘I tell you the solemn truth, before Abraham came into existence, I am!’* (John 8.57-58). [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. The Old Testament opens with the Pentateuch. These five books, written by Moses, tell of creation, the fall of man, the patriarchs, the birth of the Jewish nation, the mass exodus of God’s people from Egyptian captivity, their forty-year wilderness wanderings, and the giving of God’s law. Following the Pentateuch are the historical books. As the name implies, the historical books tell the intriguing story of the Jewish people and the land given to them in perpetuity by God. Following the historical books is the *Ketuvim* [כְּתוּבִים], which may be translated as “Writings” or “Hagiographa.” The Ketuvim is broken down into three subsections: the poetic books (*Sifrei Emet*), the five scrolls (*Hamesh Megillot*), and what are simply known as “the other books.”

The poetic books of the Ketuvim, sometimes classified as wisdom literature, include Psalms, Proverbs, and Job. Collectively known as *Sifrei Emet* or “documents of truth,” the book of Psalms is “God’s hymn book,” Proverbs is a collection of wise sayings, and Job offers divine reasoning behind the question of human suffering. Many of the psalms pull back the curtain of time by revealing the coming of Israel’s long-awaited and highly anticipated Messiah. Proverbs, a treasury of God’s wisdom, also points to Jesus, the Author of Wisdom. The book of Job, perhaps the oldest book of the Bible, gives deep insights into the mind of God while providing readers with a prophetic look at the One who will redeem His people from the ravages of sin and suffering.

Another subsection of the Writings is the *Hamesh Megillot*, that is, “Five Scrolls.” These books are the Song of Solomon, Ruth, Esther, Lamentations, and Ecclesiastes. It should be noted that Ruth and Esther are also listed among the historical books. The Song of Solomon vividly describes married love and is linked to God’s passionate love for His people. Ruth is a love story that offers a foreshadowing of our great Kinsman-Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Esther reveals the providential hand of God in the affairs of humankind; Lamentations is a mournful dirge about the fall of Jerusalem; and Ecclesiastes is a philosophical work that wrestles with human folly and the meaning of life—and its perceived lack of meaning.

The other books in the Writings or Ketuvim are Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, 1 Chronicles, and 2 Chronicles. Daniel, whose story takes place during the Babylonian captivity, is a book of prayer, purpose, principle, power, and prophecy. Both Ezra and Nehemiah are post-exilic books that detail the rebuilding of Jerusalem and its temple. Finally, 1 and 2 Chronicles are vital in the understanding of Israel’s monarchy and the tragic dividing of God’s people into two weaker

nations. It should be noted that, in the Jewish tradition, Ezra and Nehemiah were one book, and 1 and 2 Chronicles were also considered a single book. These five books, like Esther and Ruth, are also listed among the historical books.

The apostle Paul wrote, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16–17, ESV). Briefly, then, what are the benefits and blessings that come with systematic study of the Ketuvim? Is time spent with these ancient writings truly profitable for today’s Christian?

From the poetic books, we can know about the praiseworthiness of God; experience comfort in times of grief; learn to apply godly wisdom to matters of marriage, child-rearing, morality, and money; and understand why bad things sometimes happen to good people.

In the five scrolls, we see the invisible hand of God working providentially for the good of His people, learn of our Kinsman-Redeemer who rescues us from sin, encounter the passion of God’s love, learn how man’s folly cowers in the shadows of God’s perfect wisdom, and enter the grief of a heartbroken preacher whose people have turned their backs on God.

In the other books of the Ketuvim, we meet a courageous, uncompromising prophet who remains pure and undefiled despite his surroundings; discover our spiritual roots in ancient Judaism; come to know a great king from whose line came the King of Kings; and learn how God’s discipline is always followed by mercy, hope, and restoration.

To be sure, there is much profit in studying the Old Testament books that make up the Writings, or Ketuvim. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. DIRECT PROPHECY

Direct prophecy refers Old Testament passages that give explicit predictions of the coming Messiah. These predictions then are fulfilled in Jesus Christ some of them at the first advent. A good example of this is the prophecy of the virgin birth: *For this reason the sovereign master himself will give you a confirming sign. Look, this young woman is about to conceive and will give birth to a son. You, young woman, will name him Immanuel* (Isaiah 7.14; cf. Matthew 1.23). Matthew 1:23 reads, ***Look! The virgin will conceive and bear a son, and they will call him*** ***Emmanuel***, which means *God with us*. Note that the Hebrew word translated *young woman* in Isaiah 7.14 in the context of Old Testament Israel would normally refer to young woman who was a virgin and the Greek translation of the Old Testament specifically translates it as virgin as well as the fulfillment of the passage in the Greek New Testament regarding the virgin birth of Jesus. Other direct prophecies will be fulfilled at the second advent when Jesus returns to earth. A good example of this is found in Zechariah 14. *Then the Lord will go to battle and fight against those nations, just as he fought battles in ancient days. On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives which lies to the east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in half from east to west, leaving a great valley. Half the mountain will move northward and the other half southward* (Zechariah 14.3-4).

TYPOLOGICAL PROPHECY:

Typological prophecy refers to Old Testament people, places and events that are intended by God to illustrate and point forward to Jesus’ Christ’s person or his work. Sometimes these prophecies are explicitly validated in the New Testament and other times they are not. A good example of this was the Passover Lamb sacrifice instituted by God in Exodus 12. The Lamb had to be male and perfect. Its blood had to be applied to the house for the angel of death to pass over it. This sacrifice would then point forward to the ultimate Passover sacrifice that God would accept. Paul makes this explicit tie when he states, *For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed* (1 Corinthians 5.7).

THEOPHANIES

Various manifestations or appearances of God himself in the Old Testament are referred to as theophanies. These are sometimes called Christophanies if one makes an explicit connection by later revelation to the second member of the Trinity, Jesus Christ. One example of this, in my view, is the Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament who is equated with God in Exodus 3.1-6. This Angel followed Israel as a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night (Exodus 13.21; 14.19). The New Testament makes an allusion to this which appears to specify this Angel as Christ. Paul writes, *For they [the Israelites in the wilderness] were all drinking from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ* (1 Corinthians 10.4 cf. Exodus 17.6). [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. Peter Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology – Revised and Expanded* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2008), 713. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. John seems to write against Gnosticism in 1 John 1.5–8; 4.1–3. One major form of Gnosticism was called “Docetism” = the Christ only appeared to be human (cf. 1 John 1.1–4; 4:2; John 1.14). Also, “Cerinthianism” taught that the divine Christ descended on the human Jesus at his baptism and left before his death (cf. 1 John 5.6). [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Also, Jesus had the titles of Son of God (John 10.36) as well as Lord and God (Matthew 8.20). He is equated with Yahweh in the Old Testament (1 Corinthians 2.16; Isaiah 40.13). As God Jesus is creator (Colossians 1.15-16), had power over nature (Matthew 8.26), had power over death (John 11), forgave sin (Mark 2.1-12) and rules as God (Heb 1.8). He was and is the exact representation of God inwardly and outwardly (Heb 1.1-4). Martin Luther stated, *If Christ does not remain the true natural God . . . then we are lost. For what good would be the suffering and death of the Lord Christ do me if He were merely a man such as you and I are? Then He would not have been able to overcome the Devil, death and sin. He would have been far too weak for them and could not have helped us*. (Roy Zuck, *The Speakers Quote Book* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2009), 74. [Roy Zuck, *The Speakers Quote Book* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2009), 74.]

The theological term used to describe the teaching of the two natures of Christ, divine and human, is called the hypostatic union and was articulated at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D. [Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1987), 534.] A simple definition of the hypostatic union is this. Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man (= two natures) united in one person. A longer definition of the Hypostatic Union is, *A theological expression that refers to the dual nature of Christ. God the Son took to Himself a human nature and He remains forever true God and true man—two natures in one person forever. The two natures remain distinct without any intermingling, but they nevertheless compose one person, Christ the God-man.* (Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, 713.) In other words, Jesus is the God-Man. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. The following is a short chronology of the last week of Jesus’ life:

On **Saturday,** Jesus arrives at Bethany at the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus (Matthew 26.6-13; Mark 14.3-9; John 11.55-12.11). This town is near the Mount of Olives a short walk to Jerusalem. Here Jesus is anointed for burial with the expensive oil (John 12.1-7).

 On **Sunday,** there is what is termed the triumphal entry as Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey (Matthew 21.1-11; Mark 11.1-11; Luke 19.29-44; John 12.12-19). Here the people shout out, “Hosanna to the Son of David,” which can be understood as *save now, the promised Messiah*.

On **Monday,** Jesus drives out the money changers in the Temple and later curses an unfruitful fig free symbolizing the dire state of Israel’s condition (Matthew 21.12-19; Mark 11.12-18; Luke 19.45-48). In the temple he rebukes them saying, ‘***My house will be called a house of prayer,***’ but you are turning it into ***a den of robbers***!” (Matthew 21.13).

On **Tuesday,** Jesus’ authority is debated with the Jewish leadership, the Pharisees, Herodians, and Sadducees (Matthew 21.23-23; Mark 11.27-12.40; Luke 20.1-47). The story of the widow who out of her poverty gives a very small amount (a mite = less than a penny) happens in the midst of this turmoil (Mark 12.41-44; Luke 21.1-4). The Olivet Discourse explains the fact of the Temple’s future destruction and circumstances surrounding the second coming of Jesus (Matthew 24-25; Mark 13.1-37; Luke 21.5-36). The main point is to “be ready” for the coming of the Son of Man.

On **Thursday,** events really start to pick up. First Jesus is betrayed by Judas one of the twelve. (Matthew 26.17-25; Mark 14. 12-21; Luke 22. 7-13, 21-23). Washing the disciples’ feet (John 13.1-20), the Last Supper (Matthew 26.26-29; Mark 14.22-25; Luke 22.17-20) and the Upper Room Discourse (John 14-17) give Jesus the opportunity to give some final teaching to the disciples. After Jesus’ prayer in a garden called Gethsemane (Matthew 26.30, 36-46; Mark 14. 26, 32-42; Luke 22. 39-46; John 18.1) the arrest occurs (Matthew 26.47-56; Mark 14.43-52; Luke 22.47-53; John 18.2-12) and the trials of Jesus start.

On **Friday,** the trials continue when Jesus appears before the Sanhedrin, the Roman Governor Pilate and Herod Antipas (Matthew 26.57-27.31; Mark 14.53-15.15; Luke 22.54-23.25; John 18.12-19.6). At the verdict and scourging Pilate tries to release Jesus but the crowd wants death. Pilate *asks Why? What wrong has he done?* They shouted more insistently, *Crucify him!* Jesus then is placed on the cross (Matthew 27.31-34; Mark 15.20-23; Luke 23.26-33; John 19.16-17).

The last words of Jesus on the cross give us a glimpse of Jesus’ concern and mindset in his final hours. Seven of these sayings are recorded in the gospels and while a lot can be said about each one perhaps just a reading of them without comment has a powerful impact when they are seen together: *Father, forgive them; for they don’t know what they are doing* (Luke 23.34). *I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise* (Luke 23.43). *He said to his mother, ‘Woman, look, here is your son!’ He then said to his disciple, ‘Look, here is your mother!’*(John 19.26-27). *‘Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’* (Matthew 27.46). *I am thirsty* (John 19.28). *It is completed* (John 19.30). *Father, into your hands I commit my spirit* (Luke 23.46). [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. Jesus predicted his resurrection (Matthew 16.21). If he would not have been raised from the dead he would have been considered a false prophet. After Jesus died, his tomb was guarded by a Roman guard and sealed with the Roman seal (Matthew 27.62-66). Yet the tomb was opened, Jesus came out in a resurrected physical body and it became empty. There is also the eyewitness testimony of the disciples that they were willing to die for. He was seen by the disciples and over 500 brethren (1 Corinthians 15.1-7). He talked with them and ate with them (Luke 24.39-43). Luke records, *After he [Jesus] had said this, while they were watching, he was lifted up and a cloud hid him from their sight* (Acts 1.9). [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. Robert Murray McCheyne from Zuck, *The Speakers Quote Book*, 78. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. The word rapture means *caught up*. The primary passage on it occurs in 1 Thessalonians 4.16-17. There Paul writes, *For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a shout of command, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be suddenly caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord*.

The other major passage on the Rapture is, *Listen, I will tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed – in a moment, in the blinking of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality* (1 Corinthians 15.51-53). [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. You can find further in-depth studies from the Word of God on the highlights in the life of Jesus Christ at https://bible.org/series/highlights-life-and-ministry-jesus-christ. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. Matthew, Mark and Luke are called the *Synoptic Gospels.* [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. Currently, there are over 150 Bible studies about the life of Christ on the website this information came from: https://www.neverthirsty.org/about-christ/life-of-christ/#life-of-christ.

 “New ones are added monthly. We trust that God will bless you as you read them.” [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. For example, the chart below shows that forty-two percent of the gospel of Matthew is unique to Matthew. Fifty-nine percent of Luke is unique to Luke. Just seven percent of Mark is unique to Mark, while ninety-two percent of John is unique to John. This means that in order to learn everything the New Testament teaches about the life of Jesus we must include all four gospels. Again, these and more study helps on the life of Christ are available on the *neverthirsty.org* website.

 [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. https://www.gotquestions.org/twelve-apostles-disciples-12.html [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. https://bible.org/seriespage/8-meaning-miracles-mark-435-41 [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. *There is an indissoluble connection of* ***proclamation, miracle, and faith****. The Gospel miracle cannot be isolated from this service. None of the miracles takes place in a vacuum. None of them takes place, or is recounted, or claims significance, in and for itself.* ***Their significance is only as actualizations of His Word, as calls to repentance and faith***. Everett F. Harrison, *A Short Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), p. 109. [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. Origen … long ago called attention to the fact that the name repara is never in the N.T. applied to these words of wonder, except in association with some other name. ... The observation was well worth the making; for the fact which we are thus bidden to note is indeed eminently characteristic of the miracles of the N.T.; namely, that a title, by which more than any other these might seem to hold on to the prodigies and portents of the heathen world, and to have something akin to them, should thus never be permitted to appear, except in the company of some other necessarily suggesting higher thoughts about them.” Richard Chenevix Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament* (Marshallton, Delaware: The National Foundation for Christian Education, n.d.), p. 320. [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. “In this word (‘sign’) the ethical purpose of the miracle comes out the most prominently, as in “wonder” the least. They are **signs** and pledges of something more than and beyond themselves (Isai. vii. 11; xxxviii. 7); valuable, not so much for what they are, as for what they indicate of the grace and power of the doer, or of the connection in which he stands with a higher world. Oftentimes they are thus seals of power set to the person who accomplishes them (“the Lord confirming the word with signs following,” Mark 16.20; Acts 14 3; Heb. 2.4); legitimating acts, by which he claims to be accepted as a messenger from God. “What **sign** shewest thou?” (John ii. 18) was the question which the Jews asked, when they wanted the Lord to justify the things which He was doing, by showing that He had especial authority to do them. St. Paul speaks of himself as having “the **signs** of an apostle” (2 Cor. 12.12), in other words, the tokens which designate him as such. Thus, too, in the Old Testament, when God sends Moses to deliver Israel He furnishes him with two signs. He warns him that Pharaoh will require him to legitimate his mission, to produce his credentials that he is indeed God’s ambassador; and equips him with the powers which shall justify him as such, which, in other words, shall be his signs (Exod. 7.9,10). He “gave a sign to the prophet, whom He sent to protest against the will-worship of Jeroboam (1 Kings 13.3).” *Miracles*, pp. 4-5. [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. Cf. Calvin on 2 Cor. 12.12: “They are called signs because they are no idle spectacles, but are designed to teach. Prodigies (wonders), because by their unwontedness they should rouse and strike. Powers or virtues (miracles), because they are greater indications of divine power than the things which are seen in the ordinary course of nature.” Trench, Miracles, p. 6. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. Cf. Harrison, A Short Life of Christ, pp. 112-113 for various classifications, including the one cited above. [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. Most of these characteristics follow the suggestions of Harrison, *A Short Life of Christ*, pp. 113-115. [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. It may be well to cite a few examples in proof, however unpleasantly some of them may jar on the Christian ear. Thus some children refuse to play with Him, hiding themselves from Him; He pursues and turns them into goats. Another child by accident runs against Him, and throws Him down; whereupon He, being exasperated, exclaims, ‘As thou hast made Me to fall, so shalt thou fall and not rise’; at the same hour the child fell down and expired. Such is the image which the authors of these books give us of the holy child Jesus. Even the miracles which are not of this revolting character are childish tricks, like the tricks of a conjurer, never solemn acts of power and love. He and some other children make birds and animals of clay; while each is boasting the superiority of his work, Jesus says, *I will cause those which I have made to go,*—which they do, the animals leaping and the birds flying, and at his bidding returning, and eating and drinking from his hand. While yet an infant at his mother’s breast, He bids a palm tree to stop that she may pluck the dates; it obeys, and only returns to its position at his command. The miracles which He does, so those that are done in his honor, are idle or monstrous; the ox and the ass worshipping Him, a new-born infant in the crib, may serve for an example. Trench, Miracles, pp. 28-29. [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. *Jesus cured a wide variety of complaints. Making due allowance for the imprecise medical terminology of the Gospels, we may distinguish various forms of paralysis, congenital defects like blindness, deafness and dumbness, diseases like leprosy, dropsy and fever, hemorrhage, curvature of the spine, and a severed ear. If even half of these are correctly diagnosed, the Gospel account of Jesus healing ‘all kinds of diseases’ seems no exaggeration*. R. T. France, I Came to Set the Earth on Fire (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1976), p. 67. [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. *Those of the Old wear oftentimes a far severer aspect than those of the New. They are miracles, indeed, of God’s grace, but yet also miracles of the Law, of that Law which worketh wrath, which will teach, at all costs, the lesson of the awful holiness of God. Miracles of the Law, they preserve a character that accords with the Law; being oftentimes fearful outbreaks of God’s anger against the unrighteousness of men; such for instance are the signs and wonders in Egypt, many of those in the desert (Numbers. 16.31; Leviticus 10. 2), and some which the later prophets wrought (2 Kings 1.10-12; 2.23-25); leprosies are inflicted (Numbers 12.10; 2 Chronicles 26.19), not removed; a sound hand is withered and dried up (1 Kings 13.4), not a withered hand restored. Not but that these works also are for the most part what our Lord’s are altogether and with no single exception, namely, works of evident grace and mercy. I affirm this of all our Lord’s miracles; for that single one, which seems an exception, the cursing of the barren fig-tree, has no right really to be considered such. He needed to declare, not in word only but in act, what would be the consequences of an obstinate unfruitfulness and resistance to his grace, and thus to make manifest the severer side of his ministry. He chose for the showing out of this, not one among all the sinners who were about Him, but displayed his power upon a tree, which, itself incapable of feeling, might yet effectually serve as a sign and warning to men. He will allow no single exception to the rule of grace and love. When He blesses, it is men; but when He smites, it is an unfeeling tree.* Trench, *Miracles*, pp. 25-26. [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. *The word commonly employed of our Lord’s gracious acts is****heal****, but now and again the word is****save****(to make sound or whole), pointing to a connection between the restoration of afflicted bodies and the saving of the soul. The Lord came to redeem the whole man. Not infrequently the healing of the body was closely linked to a pronouncement of forgiveness of sins, as in the case of the paralytic who was brought by his four friends (Mark 2.1-12). The Savior bore men’s sicknesses and infirmities in the days of public ministry, and their sins he bore at its close.* Harrison, *A Short Life of Christ,* p. 117. [↑](#endnote-ref-40)