

Know What You Believe!

Part 2: Christ and The Holy Spirit

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Christ is the focal point of the story of the Bible. From its opening pages to its closing verses, the person and the work of God's anointed Messiah ("Christ") is the central theme. What is anticipated in the Old Testament is realized in the New. If all references to the Messiah were removed from the Bible, there would be little left, but some moral principles to which man can never attain, along with some interesting, but pointless ancient history.

1A. The person and work of Christ

By the "person" of Christ, we mean who he "is." This is the natural beginning point, for until we know who Christ is, it is impossible to understand, or appreciate what he has done.

The pre-existence of Christ

The Bible tells us that Christ existed as a person prior to his birth in Bethlehem. This can be seen from the following four lines of evidence.

1. The testimony of the Old Testament
 - a. Micah 5:2
 - b. He appears in the Old Testament as, "the Angel of the LORD"
2. The testimony of John "the Baptist" (Jn. 1:15 *cf.* Lk. 1:26)
3. The testimony of Christ himself (Jn. 8:58; 6:61-62; 17:5,24)
4. The testimony of the Apostles (Jn. 1:1-2; 1 Cor. 10:4; Phil. 2:5-7; Col. 1:17)

The deity of Christ

The "deity" of Christ refers to the fact that Christ is God—co-equal with the Father, and the Holy Spirit. The following lines of evidence establish Christ's deity. [Before launching into an examination of Christ's deity, it is important to define two terms. The first is "deity" itself. As used here "deity" means absolute deity—not that Christ is "a god," but that he is "the" eternal God—Jehovah. Second, from time to time I will refer to a view the early church condemned; that view is called, "Arianism." While we will discuss Arianism later, it is essentially a view that recognizes only the Father as God. According to Arianism, while Christ might be viewed as a lesser deity, on a par with angels, he is not viewed as absolute deity (eternal). The early church correctly rejected Arianism, and orthodox Christianity has always viewed Arianism as the most egregious heresy, since it denies the core tenant upon which the Christian faith is built. Arianism is forever cropping up in heretical groups (like the Jehovah's Witnesses). It certainly seems to be true that old heresies never die; they just get repackaged. Why is that? Perhaps it is because so few people who profess to be Christians really understand the basis of the Christian faith. The deity of Christ is the one doctrine that every true Christian must understand and believe, and it is the one doctrine that every Christian ought to be prepared to defend. The biblical basis for belief in the absolute deity of Christ is as follows.

1. The Bible explicitly says that Jesus Christ is God.

Isaiah 9:6

Jesus is identified as the “Messiah” (“Christ” is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word for “Messiah”). The prophet Isaiah said that the Messiah is none other than “the Mighty God,” “the Eternal Father,” “the Prince of Peace.”

Isaiah 40:3,9 cf. Matthew 3:1-14, John 1:6-18

According to Matthew 3:1-14 and John 1:6-18, John the Baptist fulfilled the prophetic ministry described in Isaiah 40:3-11 of the one who would proclaim the coming of the Messiah. For whom was John sent to prepare the way? It was the LORD (Jehovah), the LORD God (Isa. 40:3,9). Since John’s prophetic ministry was based on Isaiah 40:3-9, and since John would have known that the one for whom he prepared the way was Jehovah God himself, John’s testimony concerning Jesus is nothing less than a prophetic proclamation that Jesus is Jehovah God. John’s prophetic proclamation is the fountainhead of the doctrine of the absolute deity of Christ.

Isaiah 44:6 cf. Rev. 22:13-16 and Rev. 1:8

In Isaiah 44:6, Jehovah said, “I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God besides Me.” In Revelation 22:13-16, Jesus said, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” That being the case, Revelation 22:13-16 is a patent claim that Jesus is Jehovah (a claim already made concerning Christ by John the Baptist). Interesting, Revelation 1:8 begins the book by identifying the one who is “the Alpha and the Omega”—he is, “the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty;” thus Jesus is identified in the book of Revelation as the eternal God, the Almighty.

Psalms 45:6 cf. Heb. 1:8

In Hebrews 1:8—a quotation from Psalm 45:6—the Son (Christ) is expressly called “God” (“the God”), and thus identified as the God of the Old Testament.

John 1:1-3

This is a clear and emphatic statement of the absolute deity of Christ. It is little wonder that modern-day Arians, such as Jehovah’s Witnesses, have sought to obscure these verses, since they reject the absolute deity of Christ. Actually, this passage provides three independent witnesses to the deity of Christ. In verse 1, Christ is expressly called “God.” In verse 2, he is said to have been in the beginning with God (the Father), which could only be true if he were eternal, existing prior to the creation. And, in verse 3, we are told that he created all things (everything, without exception), which could only be true if he is eternal, since he could not have created himself. We will discuss verses 2 and 3 below; for now, we will focus on verse 1. Interestingly, every major English translation spells “God” with a capital “G,” in recognition that it refers to absolute deity (i.e., the God of the Bible). The Jehovah’s Witnesses’ New World Translation (NWT) reads, “a god.” It is the position of the Jehovah’s Witnesses that Jesus is not absolute deity (equal with the Father), but that he is a lesser “god,” actually a created being on the level of Lucifer. Such a view is patently absurd on at least two grounds. 1) Although Lucifer (Satan) is worshiped by this world, and as such is referred to as, “the god” of this world” (i.e., a false god), to suggest that the New Testament presents Christ as such a false god is to display deplorable ignorance of the scriptures. The Bible is abundantly clear that there is only one true God (Isaiah 44:6,8; 45:5,6,14,18,21,22; 46:9). Unless Christ is

a false god—like Satan—then he must be the true God. 2) This entire discussion is built upon a complete misrepresentation of the Greek text of this passage by the Jehovah's Witnesses. Let me explain. In Greek, when a substantive term isn't definite, an indefinite article ("a" or "an") can sometimes be inserted. Because the word "God" in verse 1 doesn't have a definite article, the translators of the NWT inserted an indefinite article, and made the last part of the verse read: "and the Word was a god." However, this is a completely erroneous translation since "God" is definite in the original. Although "God" has no article, that is because the writer employed a stronger method of showing its definiteness. In Greek, if you really want to emphasize the definiteness of a predicate nominative ("God" in this sentence is a predicate nominative, since it renames "the Word"), you would reverse the positions of the subject and the predicate nominative (which is what John did in this passage). Of course you would have to drop the article from the predicate nominative so as not to confuse the predicate nominative with the subject. Greek grammarians call this, "the rule of the definite predicate;" it is a well-understood and documented feature of Greek grammar with which any competent translator should be thoroughly familiar. Unfortunately, since most people aren't interested in listening to an explanation of Greek grammar, the Jehovah's Witnesses have largely been allowed to get away with greatly distorting this verse. Suffice it to say, the NWT of John 1:1 is absolutely incorrect. This verse says in the strongest possible terms that Jesus Christ—the Word (cf. v. 14)—is GOD.

John 1:18

The apostle John wrote that, "No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him." Did you notice what Christ is called by John—"the only begotten *God*." Remember, according to Isaiah 44:6,8; 45:5,6,14,18,21,22; 46:9, there is no God but Jehovah. So, John's proclamation is a claim that Christ is the eternal God referred to in Isaiah—the LORD God Jehovah.

John 5:17-18

While some today might not understand the claims made by Christ, they did not go unnoticed by the Jews of Jesus' day. In this passage, Jesus referred to God the Father not as "our Father," but as "My Father" (i.e., "my own father")—a transparent claim to be of the same essence as the Father. The Jews, clearly understanding his claim, sought to kill him, "because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God" (v. 18). It might be charged that the Jews simply misunderstood what Jesus was saying; even in that unlikely case, it would have been incumbent upon John, the author of this Gospel, to have clarified that Jesus didn't actually mean what his hearers thought he meant. Far from correcting any misimpression, John continues to reinforce the claim of Christ's deity throughout this Gospel. If Jesus didn't claim to be God, but was simply misunderstood, then the Apostle John is to be greatly faulted for failing to present an accurate picture of what actually happened. (This is, of course, an impossible scenario for those who believe the Gospel of John to be an accurate record, inspired by the Holy Spirit.) There are really just two choices: 1) Jesus claimed to be God, or 2) John's gospel account is not inspired.

John 10:30-33

Jesus claimed to be "one" with the Father. Those who deny the absolute deity of Christ argue that this was a benign claim to be "in harmony with" the Father, not a

claim of deity. However, the reaction of the Jews present at the time evidences that this was not simply a benign affirmation of unity with God, for they took up stones to stone him, giving the reason: “You, being a man, make yourself out to be God” (v. 33).

John 8:24, 56-58

Jesus said to his audience, “...unless you believe that I am, you shall die in your sins.” Some versions read, “...unless you believe that I am *he*...”; however, there is no pronoun (“he”) in the original. In the Old Testament, God called himself “I am” (Ex. 3:14), in reference to his eternity. Jesus is here saying that unless men believe that he is the eternal God, they will perish in their sin. That this is the correct understanding of this verse is confirmed in verses 56-58, where Jesus again claimed to be “I am.” Note that he didn’t say, “before Abraham was, I *was*”—which would be correct if he were claiming merely to have pre-existed Abraham—he said, “before Abraham came into being [Gr. *genesthai*, —aorist infinitive], I *am*” [present tense]. In other words, Jesus was saying, “I am the eternal God—the God who appeared to Moses by the name, ‘I am’ (Ex. 3:14).” While this might not be as clear to the modern reader, we can be certain that the biblically literate Jews to whom Christ was speaking got the point instantly.

John 12:45

Here, Jesus said the one seeing him is seeing the One who sent him (i.e., the Father, cf. vv. 49-50). Of course one might argue that he was simply affirming that he (a man) was made in the image of God. However, if that is all the text means, then why is it stated here in reference to believing in Christ, and why is it that no God-fearing individual in all of biblical history ever said made such a statement as this? Clearly Christ was claiming, as elsewhere, to be divine.

John 14:7-9

Here, as in 12:45, Jesus claimed that to see him is to see the Father (v. 7). Philip, not comprehending what Jesus was saying, asked that Jesus would show them the Father. To this, Jesus replied, “Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how do you say, ‘Show us the Father?’” It couldn’t be more clear; Jesus was claiming that he and the Father were of the same divine essence (v. 10), to see one was to see the other—a claim that when made in the presence of the Jews was clearly understood as a claim to be God (cf. 10:33).

John 20:28

Thomas had not been present on the previous occasion when the risen Christ had appeared to the disciples (20:19-25), and he had said that unless he saw the risen Christ himself, and put his finger into the place of the nails and his hand in Christ’s side, he would not believe. Thomas was not a man to be tricked; he demanded hard evidence, and we can appreciate that about him. Thomas got that evidence eight days later when Christ reappeared to the disciples while Thomas was present. Thomas’ response was to say to Christ, “My Lord and my God.” Arians, such as Jehovah’s Witnesses, typically respond that Thomas, in his excitement, simply gave glory to God, but was not actually calling Christ “Lord” and “God.” (Sort of Like someone saying, “My God!”) However, the text and the context are clear that Thomas was referring to Christ as Lord and God. If this were such an expression, “Lord” and “God” would be in the vocative case—they aren’t; they are in the

nominative case. Second, the text is explicitly clear that Thomas was speaking directly to Christ when he said to him, “My Lord and my God.” Thus it is clear that this could only be an appellative statement. It should be understood as: “[*You are*] my Lord and my God!” The omission of the verb with subject (“you are”) was actually a rather common form of intensification.

Acts. 20:28

Here Paul instructs the church to be on guard for the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made them overseers, “to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with his own blood.” The blood can only be the blood of Christ (who else purchased the church with their own blood?), who in this passage is expressly referred to as, “God” (i.e., “the” God).

(Romans 9:5)

Did Paul say, “Christ...who is over all, God, blessed forever”? Or, did he say, Christ...who is over all. God [be] blessed forever”? The question of whether Paul here refers to Christ as “God,” or merely offers a doxology, boils down to a question of punctuation. And since the punctuation of the Greek New Testament is not inspired (it was added later), it is difficult to use this passage as a proof-text for the deity of Christ. [There is an excellent summary of the interpretive options for this passage given in, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, by Bruce M. Metzger, which is the companion volume to the UBS Greek New Testament (3rd edition). However, I feel that I must take issue with Metzger’s statement (actually, the committee’s position) that Paul never referred to Christ as God in his “genuine” writings. First, Titus 2:13 is a very clear statement of Christ’s deity, which forces Metzger (the committee) to reject Titus 2:13 as genuine—very convenient wouldn’t you say? Second, Paul clearly referred to Christ as “God” in his instructions given to the elders at Ephesus (Acts 20:28)—an important fact not taken into account by Metzger. (Also see Paul’s discussion in Philippians 2:6, that Christ existed “in the form of God.”) Because of the uncertainty of the translation, this passage should not be used as a proof-text.]

Philippians 2:6

Paul said that Christ (prior to his incarnation) “existed in the form of God.” This is equivalent to saying that Christ is God; for who else but God could exist “in the form of God?” The reason that Paul discussed “form” is that he was contrasting the visible appearance of Christ before and after the incarnation, for the purpose of illustrating humility. The thought of the passage is this: If Christ, being manifest as God, could humble himself, becoming manifest as a man, we who believe in him should have the same attitude of humility. [Incidentally, this passage illustrates a very important point regarding Paul’s understanding and use of the doctrine of the deity of Christ. Many have questioned why Paul, if he believed Christ to be God, did not devote more attention to this doctrine. This has led some to conclude that the doctrine of the deity of Christ is of post-Pauline origin. However, quite the opposite is true. As we have already seen, Christ claimed to be God, and this is clearly reflected in the gospels (which, though written some years after Christ’s ascension, claim to be accurate records of the things Jesus said and did). From the very beginning, the deity of Christ was the cornerstone of the gospel. The fact that Paul alludes to the deity of Christ as a primary truth from which other (secondary) teachings could be derived, indicates that in Pauline theology the deity of Christ was not something to be established, but a “given.” To Paul, Christians were people who believe in Christ, in

his deity, in his substitutionary death, his burial and resurrection. In his letters to the churches, Paul assumed the deity of Christ to be common doctrinal ground, and built his teaching from there.

Titus 2:13

This passage so clearly teaches the deity of Christ that those who believe the doctrine to be of post-Pauline origin are forced to deny that Paul wrote this portion of Titus—even though there isn't a shred of textual or historical evidence for rejecting Pauline authorship of this verse! Paul emphatically declared Christ to be both "God" ("the" God) and "Savior." In fact, Paul employs a single article ("the") for both "God" and "Savior" (*τῷ μεγάλῳ θεῷ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν, Christou Iēsou*), indicating that both titles, "God" and "Savior," apply to the same person—Jesus Christ. [It isn't uncommon for Arians to place a comma after "God" in order to separate Christ, as Savior, from "God." However, doing so isn't translation, it is emendation (alteration) of the text, for the verse cannot be legitimately translated that way. First, there is no indication from any ancient sources that the text was ever punctuated that way. Secondly, and more importantly, the rule of the "copulative *καί*" requires that two substantives modified by a single article and joined by *καί* (the conjunction, "and") must refer to the same object.] This passage is without any doubt the prime example of Pauline theology regarding the deity of Christ. It is clear and unassailable, historically, textually, and grammatically. The only option for those who view the deity of Christ as a later creation of the post-Pauline church is to arbitrarily reject this verse; and in so doing their theological bias is clear. [Of course since the Jehovah's Witnesses have no intellectual honesty to protect, they are free to mistranslate the verse as suits their unbelief. The NWT capriciously inserts the article ("the") before Savior in order to differentiate "{the} Savior" from "the God." This is a blatant mistranslation since the author clearly indicated the equivalence of "God" and "Savior" by the intentional omission of the article—a grammatical feature with which any second-year student of Greek grammar should be familiar. The lack of intellectual honesty and scholarship in the production of the NWT is deplorable. It is quite obvious why the translators wouldn't allow their names to be revealed—no reputable scholar would want to be identified with such shoddy work.]

Hebrews 1:6-12

This is indeed an interesting passage, for it expresses the deity of Christ in numerous ways—both direct and indirect. We will note here only the direct expressions of deity, and deal with the indirect expressions below. In three verses (vv. 8,9,10) the author explicitly refers to the Son (Christ) as God. In verses 8 and 9 he is expressly called "God" ("the" God), and in verse 10 he is called "LORD" (Jehovah). [The Hebrew word "Jehovah" (or, "Yahweh"), the Old Testament name for God, it not written in the Greek New Testament; however, verse 10, which is explicitly applied to Christ, is a condensed quotation taken from Psalm 102:22-25, where the word "LORD" is "Jehovah."] Thus, the writer of Hebrews explicitly identifies Christ as "Jehovah." (This must be very embarrassing to Jehovah's Witnesses who reject Christ's absolute deity!) Jehovah's Witnesses respond that two of these statements should be translated differently. They translate verse 8: "God is your throne forever;" and verse 9 as: "God, your God, anointed you." (Thus attempting to remove the direct attribution of deity to Christ.) Apparently they didn't notice that in verse 10 the term "Lord," which is clearly applied to Christ, is a reference to Jehovah God in the Old Testament, and they let the common translation stand. (I know; it makes you wonder when people can't even be consistent at being wrong.) The

bottom line is that even if one of these three statements stands, Christ is God; and even in their own distorted translation, the Jehovah's Witnesses acknowledge that Christ is Jehovah (in verse 10). However, let's go back and ask whether the translation they offer in verses 8 is legitimate. Actually, from a purely grammatical standpoint one could translate verses 8 and 9 as they appear in the NWT; however, grammar isn't the whole story in translation—it never has been. In translation, when confronted with multiple possibilities of how a passage could be translated, one must ask if the textual context, theological context, or common sense provides some clue as to which translation is preferable. In this case there is strong contextual evidence that Christ is being referred to as Jehovah God (v. 10). Also, there seems to be a hierarchical problem with the NWT. If "God" doesn't refer to Christ (because he isn't God), Jehovah God would be inferior to Christ (who is not God), since Christ would be seated upon God (which, of course, makes no sense at all). To say that God "secures" one's throne is one thing, but to say that God "is" the throne upon which one will be eternally seated is quite another thing. How could God be the eternal throne of an inferior being? In the section below, we will look at the numerous ways in which this passage also implies the deity of Christ.

Revelation 1:8 (*cf.* Isaiah 41:4)

See Isaiah 44:6, above. Here "the Alpha and the Omega" is identified as "the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." In the same book (Rev. 22:13) John records Christ as saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega." [This message was delivered through an angel. The angel was not Christ, but was sent with this message from Christ (v. 16). Quite interestingly, the same word in the NWT applied to Christ in Hebrews 1:10 ("LORD") is translated "Jehovah" three times in Revelation 22:5-7!] Isn't it just a bit ironic that the Jehovah's Witnesses don't know that Christ, whose Godhood they deny, is actually Jehovah? I suppose there will be some pretty shocked people at the final judgment when they stand before Jehovah only to discover that Jesus Christ, whom they have denied, is Jehovah God.

2. Biblical statements imply that Christ is God

The following passages record statements made by, or about Christ, that would only make sense if he were God; hence, they imply his absolute deity.

Matthew 7:21 *cf.* 13:41

Christ taught that he is the Lord of the kingdom of heaven; he even referred to it as "his" kingdom.

Matthew 11:27-30

While all of the prophets called men unto God, Jesus called men unto himself.

Matthew 12:1-8

Christ said that he is greater than God's Temple and Lord of the Sabbath—a patent claim to be Jehovah God of the Old Testament.

Matthew 13:41

He claimed to be in command of the angels of God.

Matthew 22:41-46 cf. Mark 12:35-37

At one point late in Jesus' ministry, each of the three leading parties of the Jews (the Herodians, the Sadducees, and the Pharisees) attempted to discredit him by asking disingenuous questions by which they intended to entrap him. Jesus met each of these challenges, and refused to fall into their traps. In this pivotal encounter, Jesus turned the tables. It was a strategic move, a move that permanently ended the intellectual dueling; for Jesus here displayed himself to be a vastly superior intellect than his opponents. Let's listen in as Jesus deals this final, crushing defeat to the theologians of his day. In contrast to the previous three engagements, Jesus initiated this encounter with a strategic question: "What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He?" Sounds like a pretty innocuous question, at least the Pharisees thought so, and so they answered, "The Son of David." That answer landed them right in Jesus' trap, for it is precisely the answer he knew they would give. The Pharisaic conception of Messiah was of a great leader, yet still a mere man. Their charge against Christ was not that he claimed to be the Messiah (though they did not accept him as such); their charge was that he claimed to be God and to them that was blasphemy of the worst sort—that a man should presume to be God. Jesus then closed the trap. He asked a simple question: "Then how does David in ["by"] the Spirit call him 'Lord.' (Here he quotes Psalm 110:1; saying: "The LORD said to my Lord, 'sit at my right hand, until I put thine enemies beneath thy feet.'" I can imagine that the Pharisees started to sweat, for they knew that Jesus had slammed the trap shut on them. They had said it themselves: The Messiah is David's Son, yet Jesus had quoted a Davidic psalm in which David, speaking by the Spirit of God, stated that Messiah is, in fact, his Lord—proving that the Messiah is much more than a mere man. Jesus closed the dialogue with a simple, "How is that?" and was greeted with stunned silence—not a word. In fact, we are told that from that day forward these shell-shocked experts in the Hebrew Scriptures never dared to ask Jesus another question. Not only did Jesus claim to be God, he proved to the scholars of the Hebrew Scriptures that David believed the coming Messiah was his own Lord.

Matthew 25:31-46

He said that he will determine who will enter the kingdom of God, and who will go into everlasting punishment. In other words, he is the Judge before whom all men will one day stand.

Matthew 28:18

He said that he possesses all authority in heaven and on earth! He didn't simply claim to have authority; he claimed to have "all" authority in heaven and on earth. What a stupendous claim! Who but God could properly exercise such authority? Could the Father, justly, righteously, and wisely commit absolute authority over all creation (heaven and earth) unto a mere creature?

Mark 2:3-12

Christ forgave sins committed against God. While one might forgive sins committed against himself, it would hardly be appropriate for one to forgive sins committed against another. How much more inappropriate would it be for Christ, if he were a mere creature to forgive sins against God? Christ's claim to forgive sins against God is an implicit claim to be God, and was clearly recognized as such by those present since they regarded his act of forgiving sin as blasphemous (vv. 6-7).

Luke 4:16-21; John 4:24-26

Christ claimed to be the “Messiah.” Furthermore, he taught that the Messiah is Jehovah. (In Mark 12:35-37, Jesus pointed out that David, speaking by the Holy Spirit, called the Christ “Jehovah” in Psalm 110:1).

Luke 24:25-27

He said that he is the focal point of all the Scriptures!

John 10:27-33 *cf.* 5:17-18

He claimed to be of the same essence as the Father.

John 1:3,10; Colossians 1:15-17

He is referred to as the “Creator” of the world.

John 1:12

He has authority to make men God’s children.

John 4:42 *cf.* Isaiah 43:10-11

He is referred to as the “Savior” of the world—even though the Old Testament clearly taught that Jehovah is the only Savior!

John 3:15-16, 36; 6:47-51; 10:27-28; 11:21-27

Christ said that he is able to impart eternal life (which would hardly be possible were he not eternal himself).

John 11:38-44

He raised the dead. Elijah and Paul also raised the dead, but they didn’t claim to be God. Remember, the purpose of miracles is to validate the message of the one who works the miracle. If Jesus claimed to be God and raised the dead to validate his claim, his claim is true, and he is God.

John 6:40,44

Christ said that he would resurrect believers in the last day.

John 5:23

He taught that all men should honor him even as (in the same way that) they honor God the Father! (To honor God is to worship him.) Even on the lips of an archangel, such words would be blasphemous. There are only two options: either Christ is God Almighty (Jehovah), or he is a blasphemer worthy of eternal damnation; there is no middle ground for one who made such claims.

John 6:60-62

Christ taught that he came down from heaven.

John 9:35-38

Jesus claimed to be “the Son of God,” and as such he accepted worship.

Luke 4:8

Yet he taught that men should worship God alone.

John 19:7

The charge against him at his trial was that he claimed to be the Son of God—a charge he did not dispute.

John 10:24-38

His Jewish audience clearly understood that in referring to himself as “the” Son of God, he was claiming to be God.

Revelation 22:8-9

Even angels sent directly from God refuse to be worshiped; thus, when Christ permitted others to worship him it was an implicit claim of deity.

John 14:23

Jesus said that his work was co-extensive (on an equal level) with the Father’s work.

John 16:14

He taught that the Holy Spirit (himself God, cf. Acts 5:3-4) would not speak of himself, but would glorify him (Christ).

John 17:5

Christ claimed to have shared the Father’s own glory in eternity past.

John 17:22

He claimed to share the very essence of the Father.

Acts 1:3 *cf.* Romans 1:4

He arose from the dead, which was the validation of all of his claims.

Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:3

Christ is referred to as the very “image of God” (the exact representation of God). “Being the image” and “being made in the image” are not the same. Christ “is” the image.

Hebrews 1:6 *cf.* Matthew 4:10

The Father commanded the angels to worship the Son. Yet only God is worthy of worship, and angels refuse to accept worship (Rev. 22:8-9).

3. Christ possesses the attributes of God

Some of the attributes ascribed to Christ are:

Eternality (Mic. 5:2; Rev. 1:11-18; Jn. 17:5)

Self-existence (Jn. 1:1-3; Col. 1:16-17)

Omnipotence (Matt. 28:18; Philp. 3:20-21; Heb. 1:3; 2 Pt. 1:3)

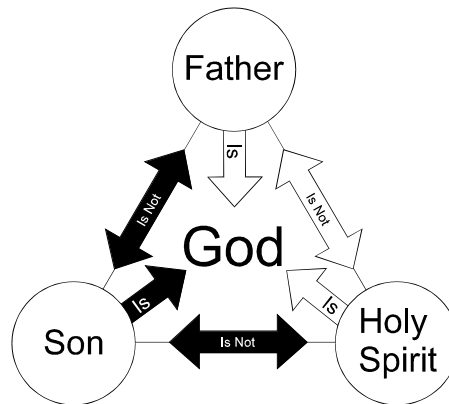
Omniscience (Lk. 7:36-50; Jn. 1:43-51; Matt. 9:4; Jn. 21:17)

Omnipresence (Matt. 18:20; Eph. 1:22-23)

Immutability (Heb. 1:11-12; 13:8)

Sovereignty (Isa. 6:1-5 *cf.* Jn. 12:41; Col. 1:16-17)

The Son's Relationship With Other Members of the Trinity

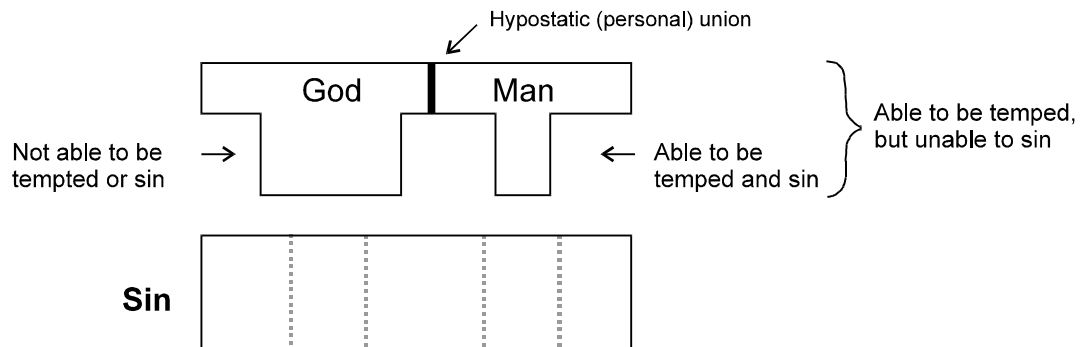


The impeccability of Christ

The term “impeccability” refers to the inability to sin. On the surface, the question of whether Christ was “peccable” or “impeccable” seems irrelevant, since he didn’t sin. However, the position one takes on this issue has serious implications for other important doctrines, most particularly the hypostatic (personal) union of Christ’s divine and human natures. Only to the extent that Christ’s two natures form one divine/human person is Christ able to be the perfect sacrifice for sin (i.e., being both God and Man). The issue of whether or not Christ could have sinned usually surfaces in regard to the temptation of Christ. Some take the position that Christ must have been able to sin (i.e., he was peccable), otherwise he could not have been truly tempted, and the Scripture is clear that he was tempted (Heb. 4:15). Generally, proponents of this view maintain that while Christ’s divine nature could not sin, the human nature could have sinned. (This is the “weakest link in the chain” argument.) However, this calls into question the hypostatic union of the divine and human natures of Christ (i.e., that they formed a singular person). If one nature could have acted in disregard of the moral imperatives of the other, does that not argue that the two natures did not, in fact, form one personal being? And if that were so, Christ’s supreme qualification to be our perfect sacrifice (i.e., that he was both God and man in one person) would prove to be untrue. Fortunately, we do not have to maintain that Christ was peccable in order to understand how he could be tempted. Remember, Jesus Christ is the only person who is both fully God and fully man in one person, so we are talking about a unique case. Since God cannot be tempted to sin (Jam. 1:13), it follows that God cannot sin. So, if Jesus was God it must be the case that he could not sin. (This is the argument of “the most restrictive term.”) To suggest that he could sin is to suggest that Christ was somehow less than God. Now, how do we deal with the remaining problem—that Christ was genuinely tempted to sin? The answer is to be found in the fact that while he was, and is, the impeccable God, he was also a peccable man. Christ’s humanity, of itself, was fully capable of sin, and thus of temptation. So, if he had a peccable human nature, could he have sinned? The answer is, “No.” Why? Because both natures, not just the human, would have to consent to the sin. The argument of peccability (the argument from the “weakest link in the chain”) would only apply if Christ were not fully God and fully man in one person. As it is, Christ is fully God and fully man in one person and the argument of the most restrictive term

applies. To visualize this, consider the illustration below. Assume that you have two blocks, one atop the other. The top block has two round studs protruding from the bottom—one large and one small. The bottom block has two small holes. The small stud on the upper block is capable of passing into the small hole beneath it in the lower block, but the larger stud is not capable of fitting into the small hole below. If the upper block were sawed in two pieces it would be possible for the half with the small stud to be fitted onto the lower block. However, if the upper block remains one piece, even though the small stud is sufficiently small to fit into the lower block, it would be prevented from doing so by the large stud. In similar fashion, Christ's human nature was capable of sin, but his divine nature was not capable of sin. Hence, while temptation might appeal to his human nature, he could not have sinned without the agreement of both natures since he was the union of God and man in one person. Indeed, being just such a person was absolutely necessary in order for him to offer himself as man's perfect and infinite sacrifice for sin. The important thing to remember from this illustration is that Christ is not only God and man, but God and man joined personally (hypostatically) into one person. To suggest that Christ is peccable is to call into question that personal union. (Hum...sounds like some seemingly frivolous issues can have important theological implications! Could that be why theologians are so picky about details?)

Impeccability and the Hypostatic Union



Historical views on the person of Christ

In the early history of the Church, there were numerous ideas as to whether Christ had both human and divine natures, and how those two natures might relate. The following is a survey of those views.

1. The orthodox view (the view that has been accepted by the majority of the church) Christ is one person having both a divine nature and a human nature. He possesses a human spirit, soul, and body, and the divine spirit. The two natures though forming one person are distinct and unconfused, such that the attributes of one nature are not transferred to the other. (In other words, the divine person retains his attributes

unchanged, and the human nature retains its attributes unchanged, and the two form one divine/human person.)

2. The Ebionism

Jesus was the natural offspring of Joseph and Mary (i.e., he was not God). He so fulfilled the Law that God chose him to be the Messiah. Jesus became conscious of this at his baptism. Actually, this view is similar to the Pharisaic view of the Messiah that Jesus refuted in Matthew 22:41-46 (see above).

3. The Gnosticism

The Gnostics were dualists, holding that the physical is inferior to the spiritual. Most viewed the physical as not only inferior, but “evil” in some sense. (This is part of the early roots of amillennialism—do you see the connection?) Since the physical is inferior (evil) God could not become flesh, hence there could be not real incarnation. There were two basic expressions of Gnosticism:

- a. “Cerinthian Gnosticism” held that the divine Christ came upon the man Jesus at his baptism, and departed prior to his crucifixion.
- b. “Docetic Gnosticism” held that Jesus’ body was a mere phantom (not real humanity).

4. The Arianism

Although called “god,” Christ is not the eternal God, but a created being (the “firstborn of all creation”). Through him, God created the world. At the incarnation the “Son of God” entered a human body, taking the place of the human spirit. Accordingly, Christ was neither fully God, nor fully human. (This is the view of Jehovah’s Witness.)

5. The Apollinarianism

Jesus had a human body and soul, but not a human spirit. The divine Son of God took the place of the human spirit, thus Jesus was not fully human. This view is similar to Arianism in its view of the humanity of Christ, but it differs in its view of the deity of Christ. The Apollinarians accepted the deity of Christ, the Arians did not.

6. The Nestorianism

Jesus was indwelt by the divine Son of God. This view denies the hypostatic (personal) union of the divine and human natures.

7. The Eutychianism

The divine and human natures mixed to form a being having the qualities of both, but in the process both natures were altered.

The work of Christ in the Old Testament

We encounter the Son of God in the Old Testament in various ways. We see him first as the Creator of the world. Secondly, we see him as the Angel of the LORD, a visible manifestation of Jehovah himself. Thirdly, we encounter him prophetically as the prophesied Messiah/Redeemer to come.

As the Creator

While all three members of the Trinity were involved in creation, the New Testament emphasizes the Son's involvement. The Apostle John writes that "the Word" (the Son) was already in the beginning before the creation of anything took place (Jn. 1:1-2. (The verb, "was" is an imperfect, meaning that when the beginning took place, the Word "had [already] been,"). In other Words, the Word was not created. Furthermore, John tells us that without exception, the Word created everything that was created (Jn. 1:3). As we have remarked in our discussion of the deity of Christ, in order for Christ to be the Creator of everything created, he had to be eternal (uncreated), and thus God—which is the very truth explicitly stated by John (Jn. 1:1). In 1 Corinthians 8:6 Paul stated that all things owe their existence to the Son. In Colossians 1:15-17 Paul gave his most definitive statement on this subject. He said that Christ is the "firstborn of all creation" (i.e., the preeminent One—not the first one created, as some incorrectly suggest). He is the preeminent One because "all things" (everything) that was ever created was created "by" and "for" him (v. 16). In verse 17 Paul extended this thought by saying that Christ also sustains all things (all the things he created). Modern-day Arians have made much over the fact that Christ is referred to as "the firstborn of all creation." However, in so doing they completely fail to understand how the term is used. Clearly Paul is not saying that the Son was the first being created, for he goes to great lengths to establish that the Son created everything—not everything "else," but everything that was created, both in the heavens and on earth. Actually, Paul defines his use of "firstborn" in verse 17 when he says that he (the Son) is "before all things." That is to say, that the Son is "preeminent." In ancient cultures, next to the father, the firstborn had greater status than anyone in the family. So much so that in some cultures it was a crime worthy of death for a sibling to strike a firstborn son. In view of what Paul said, it would be completely absurd to conclude that "firstborn" as used here, means, "the first to be created."

As "the Angel of the LORD [Jehovah]"

In the Old Testament the Son of God is sometimes manifested as, "the Angel of the LORD." A careful study of the Angel of the LORD reveals that this is Jehovah himself. All theophanies (visible appearances of God) are "christophanies" (visible appearances of the pre-incarnate Christ). Some instances of the appearance of the Angel of the LORD are in the following passages. Note that for each, the context reveals that the one appearing is Jehovah God: Genesis 16:7-13 (*cf.* Jn. 1:18); Genesis 22:11-18; Genesis 31:11-13; Exodus 3:1ff; Exodus 13:21-22; 14:19 (*cf.* I Cor. 10:1-3); Judges 6:11-23, 13:9-20.

As the coming Savior (Messiah, "messiah" means "anointed one")

The Son is revealed in the Old Testament as the Savior and Redeemer, 1) prophetically (Gen 3:15; Isa 52:13-53:12); 2) in types, i.e., prefigurements: Adam (Rom. 5:14), Isaac (Gen. 22), Melchizedek (Gen. 14 *cf.* Heb. 5-7), the sacrifices, the priesthood, and the feasts of Israel.

The incarnation of Christ

The incarnation refers to the operation through which the Son of God was permanently joined to the human family through the miraculous virgin conception within Mary through the supernatural agency of the Holy Spirit. While it is common to link the

incarnation with the virgin birth, the miracle of the incarnation refers to Christ's conception—not the manner of His birth (though He was, of course, also virgin-born, as scripture plainly states, *cf.* Matt. 1:18-25, *esp.* v.25).

The method of the incarnation

The method of the incarnation was the virgin conception and birth.

1. According to Matthew 1:18, Mary conceived Jesus before she had sexual relations. Also, we are told in Matthew 1:25 that Joseph had no relations with Mary until after the birth of Jesus.
2. According to Matthew 1:20, the conception was through supernatural means (*cp.* Lk. 1:35).
3. The Bible repeatedly states Mary's virginity (Lk. 1:27, 34; *cf.* Matt. 1:18).
4. The genealogy of Matthew 1:16 implies the virgin conception. (After giving Joseph's genealogy, it states that Jesus was the descendant of *Mary*—not Joseph!) See also Jer. 22:24-30 for why Jesus could not be the physical descendant of Joseph.
5. Isaiah 7:14 (as quoted in Matthew 1:23) prophesies the virgin birth. [Note: Matthew 1:23 translates the Hebrew *'almah*—“maiden” using the Greek word *parthenos*—meaning “virgin.” To the Hebrew mind, “maiden” and “virgin” were without distinction.]

The meaning of the virgin conception and birth of Christ

1. It may have been the means through which he was born sinless (though the connection between the virgin conception and birth, and Christ's sinlessness is by no means certain).
2. It preserved him from the curse placed on the kingly line of David during the time of Coniah (Jer. 22:28-30).

Objections to the virgin birth

1. It would take a miracle. Yes—that's quite right!
2. Joseph is called Jesus' father (Matt. 13:55; Jn. 6:42; Lk. 2:33,48). Of course Joseph was Jesus' father in the earthly, family sense. (Greek has no specific term for an adoptive father;” thus Joseph is designed simply as Jesus' “father.”)
3. The virgin birth reflects the influence of pagan mythology. In mythology there are examples of procreation between the “gods” and human women; however, those examples involve the deity appearing in human form and copulating with the female. The biblical account of the virgin birth is of a totally different nature. The conception of Jesus did not involve sexual relations between God and Mary (as is evidenced by the claim that she was a virgin after Jesus' conception, *cf.* Matt. 1:25); rather, Jesus was conceived miraculously, without the

need for sexual relations. The virgin conception is unique to the Bible, and is found nowhere in pagan literature predating the New Testament; thus, the virgin conception of Jesus could not reflect the influence of pagan mythology.

The “additive change” to the person of the Son at the incarnation

Obviously, God (as the eternal being) is immutable; and Christ, being God, is therefore immutable with respect to His deity. However, this did not prevent him from taking on additional attributes (*i.e.*, the attributes of humanity) as long as the attributes of deity were not altered in the process. One might argue that this would constitute a change in His “person”—and so it did (given what we have already said about the hypostatic union); however, this would only be a problem if we view “person” as an attribute. Actually, “person” is a complex of attributes (such as intellect, will, and emotions). The change in Christ’s person at the incarnation did not alter any of His existing attributes; it merely resulted in the addition of human attributes to the person. The person changed, but the deity did not. Theologians sometimes refer to this as an “additive change.”

The purpose of the incarnation

Below are five purposes for the incarnation. The incarnation is essential to each of these results.

1. So that the Son could die for sinners (Heb. 10:1-25, *esp.* v.5).
2. So that the Son might reveal to us the character of God (Jn. 1:18; Jn. 14:8).
3. So that our Lord might have the experiences of a human life (Heb. 4:15-16).
4. In order to become our high priest (Heb. 7).
5. That He might fulfill the promises made in the Old Testament of the Messiah/King who will rule in righteousness.

Christ’s death and resurrection

Terminology:

1. *Atonement:* Atonement is the re-establishment of divine favor. It involves the transfer of guilt and penalty for sin to a suitable substitute.
2. *Expiation:* (atonement)
3. *Forgiveness:* Forgiveness is the removal (remission) of divine judgment for sin. Forgiveness is made possible only because a suitable substitute bears the judgment on behalf of the sinner.
4. *Guilt:* Guilt refers to culpability (accountability) for sin.
5. *Justification:* Justification refers to the judicial act of God in which the believing sinner is declared to be free from sin and righteous before God.
6. *Penalty:* Retribution, or just compensation for sin.
7. *Propitiation:* Propitiation refers to the satisfaction of God’s justice. For the believer, Christ is the propitiation, in that God’s righteous demand for judgment has been satisfied by Christ’s sacrifice. When God is propitiated, he ceases to view the object of propitiation as worthy of wrath.
8. *Reconciliation:* Reconciliation refers to man being brought back to God, from whom he has been alienated.
9. *Redemption:* Redemption refers to the payment that must be made to secure the sinner’s release from divine judgment.

10. *Remission*: (forgiveness)
11. *Righteousness*: Righteousness involves not only the absence of sin, but positive obedience.
12. *Satisfaction*: (propitiation)
13. *Substitution*: Substitution refers to another bearing one's penalty for sin.

Theories of the Atonement

Numerous theories have been proposed to explain the meaning and significance of Christ's death; they generally fall into one of the categories below.

1. Substitutionary atonement (orthodox view)
Christ died in the place of the sinner, bearing the penalty of sin and completely satisfying the justice of God. Scriptural support for this view is found in: Isa. 53:5ff.; Rom. 5:8; 1 Cor. 15:3; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:24; 1 Pet. 3:18; Mk. 10:45; Jn. 10:11; 1 Cor. 5:7; Heb. 10:1-14
2. The accident theory
Jesus' death had no ultimate purpose; he was killed by people who either did not understand, or did not appreciate his message.
3. Payment to Satan theory
Satan has a claim on sinners, and Christ died to satisfy that claim and purchase sinners back to God. (If you are familiar with The Chronicles of Narnia, by C.S. Lewis, this is the view pictured in the story of The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe.)
4. Moral influence theory
The purpose of the death of Christ is not to atone for sin, but rather an expression of divine love intended to motivate sinners to repentance and faith. (But, faith in "what?")
5. The martyr (or, "example") theory
Christ death as a martyr is an example of faith and should teach us to live true to what we believe, even unto death.
6. The governmental theory
In order to maintain respect for his laws, God made an example of Christ to show man how much sin offends him and how much he will judge sin if man does not repent.

The extent of Christ's atonement (Did Christ die for everyone, or only for the "elect?")

The Scripture is clear that Christ died for the sin of the whole world. This does not mean that Christ's death is applied to the sin of every person, but rather that his sacrifice is sufficient for all who will call upon him in faith. This concept is often expressed in this way: Christ's sacrifice is "sufficient" for all sin, but "efficient" (i.e., "effective") only for those who place their faith in him. This view is in sharp contrast to the view of strict Calvinism, which holds that Christ not only did not die for the non-elect, but that God actually decreed their damnation (a view called, "double predestination").

Relevant scripture: Jn. 1:29; 1 Tim. 2:6; Heb. 2:9; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 Jn. 2:2. (This will be discussed more thoroughly under the topic of “salvation.”)

Christ's resurrection

The nature of the resurrection

1. It was real (a historical event that occurred in time and space).
2. It was a bodily resurrection.
 - a. He displayed himself as having flesh and bones (Lk. 24:39).
 - b. The tomb in which he was sealed was found to be empty (Mk. 16:6).
 - c. He ate food after his resurrection (Lk. 24:41-43).
 - d. After the resurrection, Christ had the imprint of the nails in his hands and feet and the wound in his side (Lk. 24:34-39).
 - e. The angels declared that he was not in the tomb, but had risen (Lk. 24:6-8).

The credibility of the resurrection account

The resurrection was a miraculous event, and as is the case with all miracles, they are difficult to verify since they are not subject to scientific analysis, nor are they repeatable. However, a number of factors indicate that the biblical account is both accurate and credible.

1. There were competent firsthand witnesses to the events surrounding the resurrection, including at least one extreme skeptic (Thomas), who demanded physical evidence (John 20:19-31).
2. The witnesses to the events were sufficient in number.
3. The witnesses to the events were of good reputation and moral character.
4. The recorded demeanor of the disciples fits what we would expect if the resurrection were true (they were unprepared and shocked at first, but boldly proclaimed the resurrection once they understood).
5. Numerous factors in the early history of the church would be unexplainable apart from the truth of the resurrection.
 - a. The account of the empty tomb
 - b. The origin of worship on the first day of the week, instead of the Sabbath.
 - c. The very existence of the Church was built on the proclamation of the resurrection.
 - d. The message of the New Testament.
If the resurrection did not happen, how do we explain that a group of morally upright people, who taught against dishonesty of any kind, claimed, even in the face of persecution and death, to be eyewitnesses to the resurrection of Christ?

The significance of the resurrection of Christ

1. It provides additional verification as to Christ's identity—that he is the Son of God (*cf.* Rom. 1:4).
2. It is assurance that Christ's sacrifice was acceptable to God (Rom. 4:25).
3. It serves as the prototype for the future of those who believe (1 Cor. 15:20-23).

Christ's present work

1. Christ is the believer's High Priest. As such, He represents believers before the throne of God (Heb. 7:1-28).
2. Christ continually intercedes for believers before the Father (Heb. 7:25).

Christ's future work

1. He will rapture his Church (1 Thess. 4:13-18).
2. He will pour out judgment upon the earth in the final days of this present dispensation, beginning sometime during the tribulation period (Rev. 6-19).
3. He will return to the earth to end the tribulation and to establish his kingdom (Rev. 19:11-20:4).
4. He will remove Satan and the demons from the earth, and rule in righteousness during the millennial kingdom (Rev. 20:1-3).
5. He will dissolve the present heavens and earth (Rev. 20:9).
6. He will judge unsaved men and the unholy angels, condemning them to hell for eternity (Rev. 20:10-15).
7. He will create a new heavens and earth, over which he will rule forever (Rev. 21-22).

[For more information on the future works of Christ, see part 5—"The future."]

2A. The person of the Holy Spirit

It is important to understand that the Holy Spirit is not simply a power, or a force; he is a person. The Holy Spirit indwells the redeemed individual. Having power within is one thing—having a person within is something else. Many deny the individual personhood and deity of the Holy Spirit, instead viewing the Spirit as an expression for “God’s power.” It is important therefore, to establish both the unique personhood and the absolute deity of the Holy Spirit.

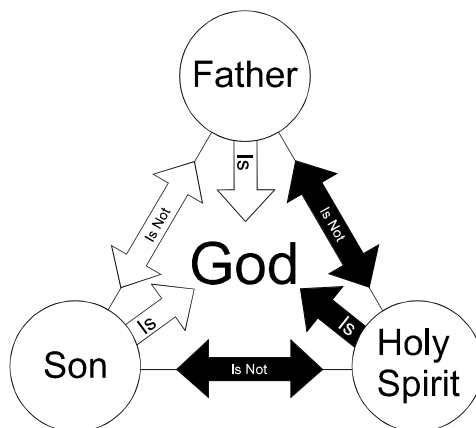
The Holy Spirit has personal qualities that a force alone could not have

1. The Holy Spirit has intellect (1 Cor. 2:11).
2. The Spirit has a will (1 Cor. 12:11, 18).
3. He has emotions (Rom. 8:26 [the word “groan” is *stenazo*; on the use of this word see, 2 Corinthians 5:2,4 and Hebrews 13:17]).
4. He is a personal being, capable of interpersonal relationships (Matt. 12:30-32; Acts 5:3; Eph. 4:30; Heb. 10:29).
5. He engages in personal acts (John 14:26; Acts 13:2; Rom. 8:26f).
If the Holy Spirit is not distinct from the Father, to whom does he pray?

The Holy Spirit is God (co-equal with the Father and the Son)

1. The Holy Spirit is called “God” (Acts 5:1-5). He is called “the Lord” in both the Old and New Testaments: Isaiah 6:8-9; Acts 28:25-26; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18. In Jeremiah 31:31-34, he is referred to five times as “LORD” (Heb. *yhwh*, the Hebrew name of God sometimes translated “Jehovah”), and once as “God” (Heb. *elohim*). [We must read Jeremiah 31:31-34 in the light of Hebrews 10:15-17, which identifies the speaker in Jeremiah 31:31-34 as, “the Spirit.” Thus, the Holy Spirit is also referred to as, “Jehovah.”]
2. The Spirit possesses the attributes of God (Omnipresence: Psa. 139:7-10; Omniscience: 1 Cor. 2:10-11; his habitation is a temple: 1 Cor. 6:19).
3. He does the works of God (Creation: Gen. 1:1-2; Regeneration: Tit. 3:4-6; re raised Christ from the dead: Rom. 8:11; he inspired Scripture: 1 Cor. 2:1-16; 2 Pet. 1:21; he sovereignly distributes spiritual gifts according to his own will: 1 Cor. 12:4-11; 2 Pet. 1:21)
4. The Spirit’s association with other members of the Godhead demonstrates his deity (Matt. 3:13-17; Matt. 28:18-20; 2 Cor. 13:14)

The Relationship of the Spirit to Other Members of the Trinity



The Holy Spirit is God, co-equal with the Father and the Son; however, he is not the Father, nor is he the Son. The members are three distinct persons sharing one divine essence.

The work of the Holy Spirit (general works—an overview)

His works in regard to salvation

1. Convicting: Jn. 16:8
2. Calling: Rom. 8:30; 1 Thess. 2:12; 2 Thess. 2:7-14
3. Regenerating: Tit. 3:5
4. Baptizing: 1 Cor. 12:13f.
5. Sealing: Eph. 1:13; 4:30
6. Indwelling: 1 Cor. 6:19; Rom. 8:9

Other works of the Spirit

1. He was involved in creation (Gen. 1:1-2; Psa. 33:6).
2. He is the author of Scripture (2 Pt. 1:21; 1 Cor. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16).
3. He gives illumination to the meaning of Scripture (1 Cor. 2:11-14).
4. He was the source of Christ's miraculous conception (Lk 1:34-35).
5. He was the source of Christ's power (Matt. 12:28; Acts 10:38).
6. He raised Christ from the dead (Rom. 8:11).
7. He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (Jn. 16:8-11).
8. He grants gifts to the Church, according to his will (1 Cor. 12:1-11).
9. He fills individual believers (Eph. 5:18).
10. He empowers believers (Acts 4:23-31).

Specific works of the Holy Spirit (in detail)

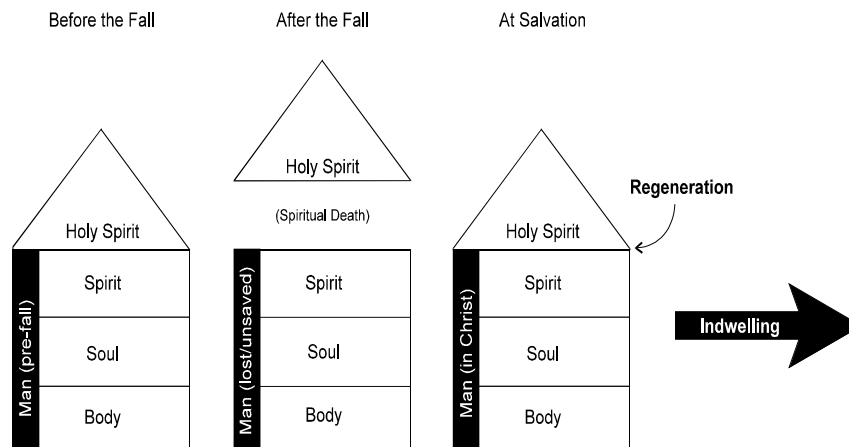
Regeneration and indwelling

We can group regeneration and indwelling together because they refer to different aspects of the same operation. The distinction is that indwelling is the continuation of regeneration.

Definition of regeneration: Regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit in which a sinner (who is spiritually dead by nature) is made alive, when his human spirit is brought into union with the Holy Spirit.

Definition of indwelling: Indwelling is the continuation of the relationship established at regeneration.

The Relationship Between Regeneration and Indwelling



Baptism (*Spirit baptism, not to be confused with water baptism.*)

Definition: Spirit baptism is the operation of the Holy Spirit by which one believing in Christ is placed into Christ's body, the Church.

Three sources of confusion:

1. The significance of Spirit baptism can only be understood in light of what it accomplishes—making one a member of the body of Christ, the Church (1 Cor. 12:13). Apart from an understanding of the unique nature of the church, the significance of Spirit baptism cannot be appreciated.
2. Sometimes Spirit baptism is obscured by an emphasis on water baptism.
3. Spirit baptism is often incorrectly associated with the presence of certain phenomenal gifts, like tongues, prophecy, healing, or other miracles. While Spirit

baptism and the giving of these gifts did occasionally coincide (historically) in the early church, there is no theologically necessary connection between Spirit baptism and miraculous gifts. This can be seen by the fact that while the Spirit baptized all New Testament believers, not all received miraculous, evidential gifts (1 Cor. 12:13 *cf. vv. 29-30*).

Some observations on Spirit baptism:

1. Spirit baptism is unique to the church-age.

According to Colossians 1:24, the church is the body of Christ. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 12:13 that Spirit baptism places one into the body of Christ; thus, Spirit baptism places one into the “church” (the invisible, universal church, not the local, visible church). There was no Spirit baptism in the Old Testament, and thus no universal church. (Note that Acts 1:5 views Spirit baptism as a future work). The Spirit began the ministry of baptism on the day of Pentecost, A.D. 33, just a few weeks after the resurrection of Christ. [Christ was crucified on April 3, A.D. 33, not A.D. 32 as is often incorrectly assumed.] Peter recognized that Pentecost was the beginning of the church (Acts 11:15-17). Understanding that Pentecost, A.D. 33, is the beginning of the church, and that the church is distinct from Israel (which began almost two thousand years earlier) is absolutely essential for the proper interpretation of biblical future prophecy.

2. All church-age believers partake of Spirit baptism.

- a. This truth is explicitly stated in 1 Corinthians 12:12-13.
- b. Ephesians 4:5 implies this truth in that “one baptism” applies to the group that has “one faith” and “one Lord.”
- c. This truth is implied from the fact that believers are nowhere urged to be baptized by the Spirit (i.e., to seek Spirit baptism).

3. Spirit baptism only occurs once in the life of a believer. It should not be confused with “filling” which is a repetitive operation.

4. The results of Spirit baptism:

- a. The believer becomes a member of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-13; Eph. 4:4-5; Gal. 3:26-29).
- b. The believer is united with Christ in his death and victory over sin—and sin’s power (Col. 2:8-12; Rom. 6:1-10).
- c. It is important to note that empowerment does not result from baptism, but from being filled by the Holy Spirit.

Sealing

Definition of “sealing” by the Holy Spirit: Sealing is the operation of the Holy Spirit in which he seals the believer into Christ, thus insuring the believer’s salvation unto the completion of the redemption process (Eph. 1:13; Eph. 4:30; 2 Cor. 1:21-22).

Filling

Definition of filling by the Holy Spirit: Filling by the Spirit refers to being under the Holy Spirit's influence and control (Eph 5:18). Some instances of filling can be found in Acts 2:1-4; 4:8-13; and 4:23-31

Gifts of the Holy Spirit

A spiritual gift is a God-given endowment of ability intended for the edification (building up) of the body of Christ (the church).

Some observations from the definition of spiritual gifts given above

1. Spiritual gifts are just that—*gifts!*
Charisma (akin to *charis* = “gift”) indicates that these gifts are not distributed on the basis of merit. A gift is by nature, unearned. It seems normative (both in Scripture and in Christian experience that an individual receives their spiritual gift(s) at the moment they receive the Holy Spirit—which is the moment of salvation. (Acts does record an exception—the Samaritans—who received the Spirit subsequent to salvation. However, that appears to have been a unique case during the transitional period of very early church history.)

2. Spiritual gifts are God-given abilities

Spiritual gifts are not highly developed natural talents; rather they are special supernatural endowments (1 Cor. 12:6, 8-9, 11). The distribution of gifts is made according to the sovereign will of God (the recipient has no control over the type of gift he, or she receives (*cf.* v.11, 18). [1 Corinthians 12:31 does not teach that believers can chose their spiritual gift(s). The verb “desire” used here (Gr. *zeloute*) is plural (referring to believers corporately, not individually). Paul was saying that the church (in this case, the local church body) should desire the greater gifts to be manifested in their midst—not that individual believers should desire the impartation of gifts other than what they were sovereignly given by God. (See *also* 1 Cor. 12:27-30; 14:1; and 14:39, and notice the plurals—*i.e.*, “you” {plural} as a corporate body desire...) One possible exception to this may have been the gift of interpretation of tongues (for which the one who had the gift of tongues could pray); see 1 Cor 14:13.

3. Spiritual gifts are an endowment of special abilities.

Gifts should be distinguished from “offices” and “place of ministry.” For example, one may have the gift of pastor and hold the office of pastor, or one may not have the gift of pastor, but hold the office. The same is true with some other gifts, such as evangelism and teaching. This brings up an interesting point: Just because we don't possess a particular spiritual gift doesn't mean we have no responsibility for that area of ministry. For example, we might not have the gift of evangelism, but we are still to evangelize. We might not have the gift of giving, but we are still to give. Having a gift simply means that one has a special divine enabling in a particular area; it doesn't mean we can focus on that area to the exclusion of all else. There may be times when it is needful for us to perform some function for which we are not specifically

gifted. We must be careful not to let the lack of a specific gift become an excuse for avoiding responsibilities we don't care for.

4. Spiritual gifts are for the edification of the body of Christ. They were never intended as private gifts to be used for personal benefit. They are not for the benefit of the individual, but for the benefit of the church (though the individual certainly might benefit from their exercise). Misunderstanding on this point can lead to much abuse of spiritual gifts. (See, 1 Cor. 12:4-7; 14:1-12; and Eph. 4:11-16.)

Descriptions of the various gifts

Duplicates in the following lists have been omitted. The precise nature of some of these gifts is not known.

1 Corinthians. 12:4-11

1. Word of wisdom: (Possibly) the ability to express the correct application of truth to particular situations.
2. Word of knowledge: (Possibly) the ability to know hidden, or secret things –usually of a non-theological nature.
3. Faith (Not to be confused with faith in general): The ability to trust and obey God to an unusual degree.
4. Healings: The ability to make physical restoration to health.
5. Miracles: The effecting of some result by supernatural power.
6. Prophecy: Speaking forth a divine revelation.
7. Distinguishing of spirits: The ability to distinguish between true and false revelations.
8. Tongues: The ability to speak the truth (the gospel primarily) in an unlearned human language. This gift could, in a limited way, substitute for prophecy in the church if accompanied by the gift of interpretation, though it was not specifically intended to be used in this way.
9. Interpretation of tongues: The ability to interpret unknown tongues.

1 Corinthians. 12:28

10. Apostles: Individuals directly commissioned by the Lord and given authority over the church (Eph. 2:19-20)
11. Teachers: Individuals given the ability to effectively communicate previously revealed truth.
12. Helps: The ability to aid those in need.
13. Administrations: The ability to manage the affairs of the local church.

Ephesians 4:11

14. Evangelists: The ability to effectively proclaim the gospel.
15. Pastor-teacher: The ability to guide, protect, and disciple the local body of believers in spiritual matters. (Not all teachers are pastors, but all pastors are teachers, and thus these gifts are linked in Ephesians 4:11.)

Romans 12:6-8

16. Service: The ability to serve the local body. This probably differed from “helps” in that helps seems to have been focused on assisting individuals with needs, whereas service appears to have been focused on assisting the body of believers corporately.
17. Exhortation: The ability to challenge believers to make application of truth and motivate people to take action.
18. Giving: The ability to share one’s resources to an unusual degree.
19. Mercy: The ability to show compassion to those in some needy circumstance.

How does one identify their spiritual gift(s)?

You may have seen a test designed to help you identify your spiritual gifts. My own experience with such tests has been disappointing. I suspect in most cases they actually measure one’s interest in certain areas, rather than the presence of a God-given gift. The best way to identify your spiritual gifts is to be active in a local church where they can become obvious to you, and to others. As that happens you should begin to get a better understanding of your gift(s). [The best place to see how well you swim is in water. You’ll find out a lot more about your swimming ability in a pool than by filling out a questionnaire. So, jump in! You may have just the gift your church needs.]

3A. Special comments on the gift of tongues

In recent times, a great deal of controversy has surrounded the gift of tongues. For that reason I would like to explore this gift in greater detail.

The nature of the gift of tongues in the New Testament

The gift of tongues was the ability to speak a message directly from God in an unlearned foreign language; thus, this gift is both revelatory (the message came directly from God) and evidential (the method of delivery—an unlearned language—was clearly a miraculous sign). It is claimed by some that tongues (or a particular sub-type of tongues) was a heavenly language, intended for use in prayer and worship. However, there is no biblical support for this claim. Every instance of the gift of tongues in the New Testament was an unlearned, human language. The New Testament makes it clear that this gift was intended primarily for the purpose of evangelism (1 Cor. 14:22), as there were other revelatory gifts intended for use within the church (1 Cor. 14:19). The speaker most likely had no idea of the specific content of the message he or she was delivering, unless they also possessed the gift of interpretation. In addition, the validity of the message was always subject to validation by one who had the gift of “discerning spirits,” or by an Apostle.

The following is an analysis of the nature of tongues in the New Testament.

1. The words used to modify tongues indicates that they were simply human languages. In other words, there is nothing in the terminology to indicate that tongues was anything other than foreign languages.

Words used as modifiers for tongues:

- a. *Genos* (1 Cor. 12:10) –a general term meaning, “kinds.”

- b. *Heteros* (Acts 2:4) –meaning, “different” or “foreign.”
- c. *Dialektos* (Acts 2:6,8) –indicating the language of a particular region. We get our word “dialect” from this Greek word.

Note that there is no hint from these modifiers that tongues were heavenly languages. [Remember, the burden of proof is on the person making the claim. If one claims that tongues in the New Testament were heavenly languages, they should provide proof to support their claim.]

2. A historical analysis of tongues clearly establishes that they were contemporary foreign languages.

a. Acts 2:1-13

This is the first instance of the exercise of the gift of tongues in the New Testament. It is especially important because the first instance of something new often gives us understanding into its nature. Here we see that at the birth of the church, on the day of Pentecost (A.D. 33), the believers were both filled with the Holy Spirit (2:4a) and began to speak in other tongues (2:4b). Because Pentecost, following on the heels of the Passover, was a major feast of the Jews, many Jews from other nations and languages were present in Jerusalem. When the believers began to speak in tongues, those from foreign lands heard them in the native tongue of their land. We have to be careful in understanding what happened. Some have suggested that maybe the way tongues worked was that when a person spoke in tongues, the listeners would hear the message in their own language, and if there were people of many languages present, each would hear the same speaker in their own language. However, such a view is very problematic, since it would require the gift to be operative within the ungifted listener rather than the gifted speaker. The reason that many people of different languages heard the message in their own native language on the day of Pentecost was that on that day a large number of disciples (about a hundred and twenty, cf. 1:15), all in the same location in Jerusalem, all received the gift of the Spirit at the same time and flooded into the street speaking in tongues. (I suspect this was a unique occasion—don’t you?) Since there were many tongues speakers present, the Jews visiting Jerusalem would have had little difficulty finding someone who was speaking in their language. In fact, we are specifically told some of the languages that were being spoken by the disciples (vv. 7-11), and they were foreign (earthy) languages, so there is no support in this passage for the notion that tongues was anything other than the ability to speak in an unlearned, earthly, foreign language.

b. Acts 8:4-17

This is the second mention of receiving the Spirit in the New Testament. It does not specifically mention tongues, however, it is likely (almost certain) that tongues were manifested as individuals received the Holy Spirit. This is the first instance of receiving the Spirit through the laying on of hands (v. 17). Remember, the Samaritans had a system of worship that paralleled the true worship of God in Jerusalem. They had their own imitation temple, their own imitation priesthood, and their own imitation sacrifices; and lest they develop their own imitation form of Christianity, God made sure that they understood that they were under the authority of Christ’s apostles. He made this obvious by delaying the giving of the Spirit until Peter and John arrived from Jerusalem and prayed and laid hands on

the Samaritan believers. Such a delay, however, was atypical, though we do see such a delay one more time in Acts 19:1-7, again for a special reason.

c. Acts 10:44-47 *cf.* 11:15-18

This is the third mention of tongues in the New Testament, and we see no change in the gift from Acts 2:1-13. Peter had been directed in a vision to go and to preach the gospel to a group of Gentiles. This is, in fact, the first occasion on which the gospel was specifically directed to Gentiles. Prior to this, the Jewish believers assumed that a person would need to first become a Jewish proselyte and then believe in Christ in order to be saved. However, quite to the surprise of the Jewish Christians, God planned to extend salvation directly to Gentiles. In this passage, as Peter explained the gospel to this group of Gentiles, as they believed, they began to speak in tongues, clearly evidencing the same gift of the Spirit as the Jews had received on the day of Pentecost. (Notice that here there is no laying on of hands in order to receive the gift.) The church called Peter to account for preaching to the Gentiles (Acts 11:1-18). In Peter's defense, he recounted the vision he had received and how he had been directed to the Gentiles (9:32-10:22). When he explained that the Gentiles had received the same Spirit (evidenced by the manifestation of the gift of tongues), the Jewish believers accepted the fact that God had opened the door to the Gentiles (11:18). Thus, in this instance, the gift of tongues served as divine confirmation to the Jews that God had granted salvation directly to the Gentiles. It is important to note that the gift of tongues that God gave to the Gentiles was the same gift of tongues he had given to the believing Jews (11:15). Again, there was no change in the nature of the gift.

d. Acts 19:1-7

This is the fourth mention of tongues in the New Testament (if we count Acts 8:4-17), and again there is no change in the gift from Acts 2:1-13. This passage (and Acts 8:4-17) are sometimes mistakenly used to teach that the gift of the Spirit is a "second blessing" that a person receives after they believe, since in both of these instances the believers received the gift sometime after they believed. [The disciples mentioned in Acts 19:1-7 were actually disciples of John the Baptist, they had yet to hear the gospel of Christ. When they heard it they believed and were baptized, and received the gifts of tongues and prophecy.] Why the men in Acts 19:1-7 did not immediately receive the Spirit as did the Gentiles in Acts 10:44-47 we are not told. Perhaps the conferral of the gifts by the laying on of Paul's hands was intended to help these men understand his apostolic authority. In any case, there is no more mention of the receiving of spiritual gifts through the laying on of hands in the remainder of the New Testament, nor is the church anywhere instructed to lay hands on new believers for the conferral of the Spirit or spiritual gifts. The two instances we have where gifts were conferred through the laying on of hands were apostolic in nature, and seem to have served a specific purpose unique to the early development of the church. That these two instances of laying on hands do not form a pattern can be seen from the fact that the instance in Acts 10:44-47, which occurs between these two instances, did not involve the laying on of hands. Again, there is no indication from the text that the gift changed from what it was in Acts 2:1-13.

e. 1 Corinthians 12:1-14:40 [especially 14:2-4]

Why was it that only God understood what was said by the tongues speaker? Not

because tongues were a heavenly language (as claimed by some), but because believers were using tongues inappropriately (uninterpreted) in the church, rather than for evangelism, and there was no one present who understood the language.

3. An examination of passages frequently appealed to in support of tongues as a heavenly language.

a. 1 Corinthians 14:2

In this passage Paul addressed the problem of the use of tongues in the local church (14:19). The gift of tongues was given as an evidential (miraculous) evangelistic gift, which means that it was designed for use with unbelievers, not with believers (14:22). However, in some churches, such as Corinth, it became commonplace for tongues to be used in the church. Since most of the people in a local church spoke the native language, in most cases the language of the tongue speaker would have been unintelligible to them, and therefore there was little or no benefit to the church. In fact, the use of tongues within the church undoubtedly took valuable time away from the exercise of gifts that would have been more helpful—like prophecy or teaching—from which the entire church could have benefited. There was, of course, nothing wrong with the gift of tongues, or with the use of tongues in the church; it was simply a matter of priorities and balance; when the church is assembled, why take a lot of time away from the gifts that can benefit the entire church, in order to exercise gifts that benefit only a few, or no one except the speaker (14:14-25)? Paul's statement in verse 2 that only God understands the tongue does not mean that tongues was some sort of heavenly language; he was simply comparing tongues to prophecy: only God would know what the tongues speaker was saying (not very profitable to the church), whereas everyone in the church could understand what the prophet said. In fact, the first twenty-five verses of this chapter are about the superiority of prophecy to tongues in the church. Of course tongues was an important gift in the spread of the gospel in the early days of the church, but each gift has its proper use, and as Paul emphasized in this chapter, tongues, while well suited for evangelistic work in the world, was not suited to use in the church. Using the gift of tongues in the church was like using a screwdriver to drive a nail—yes it can be done (very inefficiently, of course); but if you've got a hammer, why not us it, instead of a screwdriver?

b. 1 Corinthians 13:1 Note the use of *ean* ("if")—a third class conditional (in the subjunctive mood), indicating a hypothetical case. This is actually a hyperbolic expression, which depends for its force on the impossibility of speaking in an angelic language. Let me explain. Suppose I said: If you have enough strength to lift a piece of paper, but don't have love, it profits nothing spiritually. Now suppose I said: If you have enough power to lift a battleship, but don't have love, it profits nothing spiritually. Which of these is the more effective statement? Obviously the hyperbolic statement (the second statement) is the most effective. In fact, we could hardly imagine anyone making the first statement since it sounds a little ridiculous. In this passage, Paul compared the gift of tongues (being able to speak in unlearned human languages) to a hypothetical extreme (being able to speak in angelic language); even "if" one could do that, but didn't exercise such an ability in love, it would amount to nothing spiritually.

c. Romans 8:26

In this passage Paul refers to the “groanings” of the Spirit that are “too deep for words.” However, this isn’t a reference to the gift of tongues. Tongues are not discussed anywhere within the context of this passage (or even within the book of Romans). Paul was simply saying that the Holy Spirit prays for us with groaning too deep for words. In fact, if you think about it, this couldn’t possibly be a reference to tongues, since the level of the Spirit’s communication is beyond language (words).

The extent of tongues (Did God intend for every Christian to have this gift?)

In the New Testament only a portion of believers spoke in tongues (1 Cor. 12:30). This observation, coupled with the truth that the Holy Spirit sovereignly distributes gifts according to his will (1 Cor. 12:11) tells us that God never intended for every Christian to have this gift, any more than he intended for every Christian to be an apostle, or prophet.

a. 1 Corinthians 12:27-31 (cf. 12:13) esp. v. 30

All believers are baptized into Christ’s body (the church) by the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). There is no such thing as being baptized “in” (or “into”) the Spirit. This is a mistranslation of the Greek word “*en*,” which can be translated “by” (instrumental), or “in” (locative). The correct understanding is that we are baptized *by* the Spirit *into* Christ’s body (the church). 1 Corinthians 12:13 makes this point very clear.

b. Spiritual gifts are distributed in accordance with God’s sovereign will (1 Cor. 12:11,18) on the basis of grace. Therefore, we must conclude that it was never God’s will for all believers to possess this gift, nor does there seem to be any other enabling gift that is universally given.

The desirability of tongues in the church

The gift of tongues was a good gift; it came from God (1 Cor. 14:5a, 18), and as the saying goes (grammar aside), “God don’t make no junk!” However, for use in the church, tongues was much less desirable than some of the other gifts. That only makes sense, since tongues was principally an evangelistic gift. Paul said that he wished all of the Corinthian believers had the gift of tongues; however, in the same sentence he said that it would be even better if they had the gift of prophecy (1 Cor. 14:5) so that they could speak the truth plainly for people to understand. In fact, he said that in the church, he would rather speak five words plainly, than speak ten thousand words in a tongue (1 Cor. 14:19)!

The purpose of the gift of tongues

The primary purpose of tongues was “evidential”—it was a supernatural sign that the speaker was speaking with divine authority. God’s primary intention in the giving of this gift was evangelistic, though we do find it used on one occasion as a sign to Jewish believers as confirmation that God was calling Gentiles into his kingdom. Note the following observations regarding tongues. Mark 16:17: Jesus referred to tongues as one of the “signs” that will accompany true believers after his ascension. 1 Corinthians 14:21-22: Paul states that the gift of tongues was intended as a “sign” to unbelievers. Hebrews 2:3-4: Although this passage doesn’t mention tongues individually, it does refer to the

“signs and wonders” and various miracles and gifts of the Spirit that were given to the early church (and which they recorded for us) in confirmation of the gospel. Acts 2:22: Peter’s statement here was in regard to the miracles performed by Christ himself, nevertheless, he states that the purpose of those miracles (and we may surmise of miracles in general, including tongues) was attestation of the truth of God’s message.

The use of tongues in the church [1 Corinthians 14:26-40]

Primarily because of the inappropriate use of tongues in the Corinthian church, Paul laid out a number of regulations for using the gift in the local church.

1. Any use of spiritual gifts that does not lead to edification is improper (v. 26).
2. Use of the gift of tongues should not dominate the service. Only two (or three at most) should exercise the gift in any service; and then, only one at a time (v. 27).
3. Uninterrupted tongues were strictly forbidden in public worship (v. 28).
4. Women ought not to speak, either in tongues or prophetically, in the general assembly of the church—where men are present (v. 34). This is often viewed today as simply a first century cultural phenomenon that does not apply to the modern-day church. However, in 1 Timothy 2:9-15 Paul includes teaching in this list and gives the reason as the order of creation—clearly not a culturally based reason. In other words, Paul said that it is inappropriate for women to give instruction to, or exercise authority over men in the church due to the dignity of the man as evidenced in the order of creation. (Of course it would be acceptable for women to teach other women, and they are encouraged to do so, cf. Titus 2:1-5.) While such a concept might not resonate well with modernistic and feminist theology, it is a universal (non-culturally bound) principal taught in the New Testament that authority in the church is properly exercised through men—it is, after all, God’s Church and he can run it as he sees fit.

Misconceptions about the gift of tongues

There are some widespread misconceptions regarding the gift of tongues. One is that God wants every Christian to have this gift; another is that Christians who do not possess the gift of tongues are to seek to have it. And finally, it is sometimes implied that speaking in tongues is a sign that a person has passed to a higher level of spiritually.

1. Although the gift of tongues was important to the early church for the rapid spread of the gospel, tongues was never a necessary work of the Holy Spirit in the life of an individual believer (i.e., something that every believer must, or ought to have). We know this because: 1) the Holy Spirit sovereignly gave each believer the gift (or gifts) that he (the Spirit) desired (1 Cor. 12:4-11); and, 2) the Spirit did not give everyone the gift of tongues (1 Cor. 12:28-31). Therefore, it should be clear that God never intended for every believer to have the gift of tongues. In fact, there doesn’t seem to be any particular enabling gift that is universally given. While Paul stated that he “wished” all of the Corinthian believers had the gift of tongues (1 Cor. 14:5), he recognized that it simply doesn’t work that way. Gifts are given according to the sovereign will of God.

2. The gift of tongues was not one of the more desirable gifts for the church. In 1 Corinthians 12:28 Paul lists the gifts of the Spirit in order of their priority. [In Scripture, enumerated lists are either chronological or prioritizations. Since all of the gifts of the Spirit were given at the same time (on the day of Pentecost, A.D. 33), the list given in 1 Corinthians 12:28 must be a prioritization; and, in fact, we can easily see that from the structure of the list itself.] In order of priority Paul lists: apostles first, prophets second, teachers third, then he lists miracles, and then he lists healings, helps, administrations, and finally, tongues. It is sometimes asserted that in 1 Corinthians 12:31 Paul instructed believers to desire to possess the “greater” gifts. However there are two problems with that interpretation. 1) The statement in 1 Corinthians 12:31 was addressed to the church as a whole (i.e., you [plural] as a church body are to desire to have the greater gifts manifested in your midst). Paul was not suggesting that individuals should seek to possess greater gifts; he had already explained that the gifts are distributed by the sovereign will of the Holy Spirit. 2) Even if one were to seek to possess a particular spiritual gift, tongues would have been the least desirable gift. [If some gifts are “greater,” that implies that some are “lesser.” Paul clearly classifies tongues as the least of the lesser gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:27-31.

3. The exercise of the gift of tongues was not a sign of spiritual attainment or spiritual maturity. Remember, spiritual gifts are simply that—“gifts.” Even though there was an over abundance of tongues speaking in the Corinthian church (which, in part, occasioned Paul’s corrective letter), the believers at Corinth were characterized by gross spiritual immaturity (1 Cor. 3:1-3).

The cessation of tongues

All evidential miracles have a limited life span. They are always associated closely in time with the newly revealed truth to which they attest (validate). The New Testament writers prepared the church for the cessation of the revelatory gifts (prophecy, tongues, and word of knowledge). The question is: Have these gifts ceased, and if they have ceased, when did they cease? The following observations should help us to arrive at an answer to this question.

1. In 1 Corinthians 13 Paul discusses the use of the revelatory gifts (prophecy, tongues, and supernatural knowledge—otherwise called, “word of knowledge”). In the first eight verses he deals with the superiority of love to spiritual gifts (implying that any gift not exercised in love amounts to very little). Even tongues exercised without love is just noise (v. 1). In verse 8 he reveals that the gifts of prophecy, tongues, and hidden knowledge (such as Peter exhibited in Acts 5:1-11) will cease at some point in the future (from Paul’s historical perspective). The remaining five verses in this chapter tell us when that will happen, and it is one of the most misinterpreted passages in the New Testament. Often these verses are interpreted to mean that when “the perfect one” (Christ) comes, there will be no more need for partial revelatory gifts. However, that’s not what this passage says. The “perfect” is not Christ since the word is in the neuter gender; it is a reference to a perfect (or complete) “thing.” The thing is knowledge. Just as there is partial knowledge (revealed through prophecy, tongues, and word of knowledge), so there is complete knowledge (as revealed in the completed Word of God). The word “perfect” [Gr. *toteleion*] means “complete”—it’s the word from which we get our words for “tele-phone” and “tele-vision” (both of which mean to make a complete (end-to-end)

connection. What Paul was saying as he wrote was that right now (in A.D. 56, before the completion of the Bible) knowledge of the truth is partial (piecemeal), revealed through prophecy, tongues, and word of knowledge; but there is coming a time when that knowledge will no longer be partial, but complete (in so far as what God intends to reveal in this dispensation). At that time the revelatory gifts will no longer be needed and they will cease. It is a historical fact that at the completion of the New Testament, near the end of the first century, these gifts passed quietly off the scene. By the second century, the only groups that even claimed to manifest these gifts were groups with serious doctrine deviations (usually involving the denial of the absolute deity of Christ). So, in this case history confirms this interpretation to be correct. When the last book of the New Testament was finally written, that was all God had to say to the church (at large)—it constituted a completed revelation, and the gifts of partial revelation were no longer needed. In light of this, the meaning of Paul's closing comments is quite plain. Just as there comes a time when a man "grows up" and puts away childish things, so (from Paul's historical perspective) there is coming a time when the revelatory gifts will no longer be needed.

[Misunderstanding the phrase, "face to face" in verse 12 has been a source of some confusion. There was no word in the Greek of that time for "clear;" they simply used an idiom (it does not denote that the thing seen was necessarily a person, only that it could be seen as one would see if he looked closely into someone's face).] To those who would insist that the revelatory gifts are still active, I would ask: What is it you claim to reveal that is not already revealed within the pages of the Word of God, that the church really needs to know? And if it is already there, why do we need another revelation?

Study Questions

Numbers in parentheses refer to pages in the preceding text.

1A. The person and work of Christ (pages 3-21)

1. How do we know that the Son of God, as a person, existed before his birth as a man at Bethlehem? (In other words, make a compelling case for the pre-existence of Christ.) (3)
2. Summarize the evidence for the absolute deity of Christ. (3-13)
3. Of the passages that explicitly state that Jesus is God, choose the two that you think are the best passages for proving the absolute deity of Christ. Summarize the two passages you chose. (3-9)
4. Of the passages that imply that Jesus is God, choose the two that you think are the best passages for proving the absolute deity of Christ. Summarize the two passages you chose. (9-12)
5. What attributes (qualities) of God are ascribed to Christ in the Bible? (12)
6. Is Christ the Father? Is Christ the Holy Spirit? Explain your answer. (From the illustration on page 13)
7. In regard to Christ, what is meant by the term, "impeccability." Explain why the doctrine of Christ's impeccability is important. (13-14)
8. What are the two natures of Christ, and what is their relationship? (13-15)
9. Which incorrect view(s) held that Christ was not fully human? Summarize each of these view(s). (14-15)
10. Which incorrect views(s) held that Christ was not absolute deity? Summarize these view(s). (14-15)
11. Summarize the work of Christ in the Old Testament. (15-16)
12. In what ways is Christ presented as the coming Savior in the Old Testament? (16)
13. What was the "method" of the incarnation? Explain how we know this method is true? (17)
14. What is the importance of the virgin birth? (See under "meaning," page 17)
15. Does the account of the virgin conception and birth of Christ reflect the influence of pagan mythology? Explain your answer. (17-18)

16. Briefly discuss the purpose(s) of the incarnation. (18)
17. Briefly define: atonement, justification, penalty, propitiation, reconciliation, redemption, remission, and substitutionary atonement. (18-19)
18. Briefly describe the biblical view of the atonement. (19)
19. Discuss the “extent” of Christ’s atonement. (Be sure to include scriptural support.) (19-20)
20. What important facts should be pointed out in regard to the nature of Christ’s resurrection? (20)
21. How do we know that Christ’s resurrection was a bodily (physical) resurrection? (20)
22. Why should we believe that the resurrection account is reliable? (20)
23. What is the significance of Christ’s resurrection? (21)
24. What two ministries is Christ currently engaged in? Describe each. (20)
25. Briefly discuss the future work of Christ. (21)

2A. The person and work of the Holy Spirit (pages 22-28)

26. Why do you think it is important to understand that the Holy Spirit is a person, not simply a “force.” (22)
27. Briefly, make a case that the Holy Spirit is a person. (22)
28. How do we know that the Holy Spirit is God? (22)
29. What are the works of the Holy Spirit in regard to salvation? (23)
30. What are some of the other important works of the Holy Spirit? (23)
31. Compare and contrast “regeneration” and ” indwelling.” (24)
32. Define Spirit baptism (Don’t confuse Spirit baptism with water baptism). (24-25)
33. Define “sealing” (by the Holy Spirit). (25)
34. What is the significance of being sealed by the Holy Spirit? (25)
35. What group of believers participates in Spirit baptism? (25)
36. What are the results of Spirit baptism? (25)
37. Define “filling” (by the Spirit). (26)

38. What do you think? Does a person have more of the Spirit when he/she is “filled” than when they are not “filled?” Why, or why not? (26)
39. Why are spiritual gifts called “gifts?” (26-27)
40. Explain how spiritual gifts differ from “natural talents.” (26-27)
41. Can believers choose the gifts they want? Explain your answer. (26-27)
42. Is it Okay to engage in an area of ministry you know isn’t your spiritual gift? Explain. (26-27)
43. What is the purpose of spiritual gifts? (27)
44. What spiritual gift(s) do you think might be most important? (Could this be a “trick” question? Hum...we’ll see!)
45. Have you thought about what your spiritual gift(s) might be? If so, what do you think it (they) are? How did you come to that conclusion?
46. How is the best way to identify your spiritual gift(s)? (28)

3A. Special comments on the gift of tongues

47. Describe the gift of tongues. What was the primary purpose for this gift? (28)
48. How do we know that the gift of tongues was human languages? (28-32)
49. Was everyone in the early church given the gift of tongues? Support answer from the Bible.
50. Who decides which gift an individual receives when he is saved? (See, “the extent of tongues,” page 32)
51. Was tongues one of the “greater gifts” to be desired in the church, or was it a good, but lesser gift? Support your answer (32)
52. Using the information under, “The use of tongues in the Church,” what would be wrong with a group of ten men and women all speaking in tongues at the same time in the assembled body of a local church?
53. What are some of the misconceptions regarding the gift of tongues? (33-34)
54. According to the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 13 given in the text, when would tongues cease? Is it historically true that, with respect to the normative experience of the church, tongues did cease at that point? (33-34)