

# The Lord Jesus Christ

## *Module 2.2*

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...”

John 1:1

As we briefly outlined in Module 2.1, the God of the Bible is the Creator of all things and has eternally existed as the One True God in three distinct persons; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This is not to say that the Bible reveals three gods who act in unity, but rather one God who has always existed in three persons.

Adding to his initial proclamation that the “Word was with God, and the Word was God” the apostle John writes in his gospel account that Jesus, “was in the beginning with God” (John 1:2) and that Jesus has made known the Father by becoming flesh and dwelling among us (John 1:18, 14). The apostle Paul writes in Colossians 1 that Jesus is the “image of the invisible God,” (Col. 1:15) and the writer of Hebrews adds that Jesus, “is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature” (Heb. 1:3). Continuing on in Colossians and the gospel of John, we learn that “by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him” (Col. 1:16) and that “all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men” (John 1:3-4).

Jesus, however, is not only the Creator of all things, but He is also the sustainer of all things. The writer of Hebrews expressly states that Jesus “upholds the universe by the word of his power,” (Heb. 1:3) and Paul further declares in Colossians 1 that Jesus “is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (v. 17).

Perhaps to understand these truths in a tangible way, consider that the very breath we just took was taken because Jesus allowed us to take it as He upholds the very atoms of our atmosphere by the word of His power. There is not a single molecule within the universe, or action of man upon the Earth, that is outside of His Lordship and sovereignty. He is ruling and reigning; and He is good.

To be sure, our understanding of Jesus as the sovereign Creator and sustainer of all things creates a paradoxical tension for us when we also consider that evil is real within the world, and the human experience is fraught with hardship and suffering. While an ethical treatment of the problem of evil is outside the scope of this paper, it is enough to say here that there would be far greater problems if evil was not under the sovereign control of Jesus. For, if evil is outside of His control then He is powerless to one day fully and finally conquer evil, sin, sickness, and death.

Yet, that is exactly what He has promised to do. Revelation 21:4 tells us that Jesus, “will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” On the bedrock foundation

of these and many other promises, we can by faith join the apostle Paul in considering “that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Rom. 8:18).

Perhaps what is most astounding about our Lord and Savior is not His power and sovereignty, but rather His humility and service. Paul tells us in Philippians 2:6-8 that Jesus, “though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” That is to say, the eternally existing Creator and sustainer of all things was miraculously conceived and born of Mary while she was still a virgin. Jesus “became flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). However, in understanding that He *became flesh* and *emptied* Himself, we do not believe that Jesus became anything less than 100% God. Rather, as Paul states in Philippians 2:7, He emptied Himself *by taking* the form of a servant.

The word Paul uses to describe how Jesus emptied Himself is incredibly informative. BDAG defines it as “taking hold of something” and defines this instance of the word similarly to John’s use of the same word in John 13:12, where Jesus “put on his outer garments” after He washed His disciple’s feet.<sup>1</sup> One way to think of this is to imagine a king putting the robes of a pauper over his royal robes. The king has not ceased to wear his royal robes but, in this instance, has now chosen to put on the robes of a humble servant.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, Jesus Christ who is 100% God became 100% man in His incarnation and now and forevermore will remain fully God and fully man.

As the God-man, He is able to completely sympathize with our weaknesses since He “in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). As fully man, Jesus experienced every temptation and emotion as we do. Yet, as fully God He perfectly obeyed the Father and is the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

The language of the Passover lamb is deeply rooted in God’s story of redemptive history and comes from God’s specific instruction to the slaves in Egypt that they take and kill a lamb and then sprinkle the blood on their door frames (Ex. 12:6-7). The spotless lamb was a substitute for the people of Israel and a sign, for the LORD would pass over the homes of those who had put their faith and trust in His word and sprinkled the blood of the lamb on their door frame (Ex. 12:13). Furthermore, this Passover lamb would point forward to Jesus who came as the “Lamb of God” and secured eternal redemption, “not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by

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<sup>1</sup> William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 583.

<sup>2</sup> If we pressed this illustration one step further, we might also say that the transfiguration was Jesus pulling back the servant’s robes to reveal his royal clothing.

means of his own blood” (Heb. 9:12). Jesus is the full and final substitutionary sacrifice for His people.

As we consider the work of Jesus, we must take note that it is both the perfectly obedient life that Jesus lived and His substitutionary death that gives us eternal life. For it is in His death that He paid for all our trespasses (Col. 2:13), and it is in His life that we find not a “righteousness of [our] own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith” (Phil. 3:9). In this regard, we rejoice and proclaim that “for our sake, he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor. 5:21).

In 1 Corinthians 15:3-8, the apostle Paul concisely summarizes the life and ministry of Jesus, reminding the Believers in Corinth what they have already accepted, and what they should always hold fast to. He writes,

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.

While the historical reality of the resurrection is debated today by scholars and lay-persons alike, we must note that there is no doubt in the mind of Paul regarding the fact of the resurrection, nor is there any room for doubt that the life and death of the Son were according to the “definite plan and foreknowledge” (Acts 2:23) of the Father. For Paul, to say that the gospel was “according to the Scriptures” is for him to say that it was planned, prophesied, and fulfilled just as God the Father “predestined for it to take place” (Acts 4:28).

In the above passage, Paul also directly implies that the resurrection of Jesus can be verified by any number of those whom he lists. It’s as if he’s loudly hinting, “If you have doubts, just go ask any one of these people!” Today, though we do not have the benefit of speaking personally to these individuals, we can understand and trust the written accounts that have been inspired and preserved for us.<sup>3</sup> What is more, Paul builds his explanation of present-day living, and our future eternal reality, on the truthfulness of the resurrection.

Presently today, we believe the Scriptures declare that Jesus is ministering as our Great High Priest in the presence of the Father (Heb. 4:15-16, 8:1-2) and awaiting the time when He raptures His church from the earth (1 Thess. 4:13-18). The eternal future of all believers is to be with Jesus in the place He has prepared for us (John 14:3-4). Until then, we are those who live by

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<sup>3</sup> See Module 2.4.

faith, transformed by the power of the gospel (Rom. 1:16-17), carrying out the mission Jesus gave us (Matt. 28:19-20, Acts 1:8), and echoing what the apostle John wrote in Revelation 22:20, “come Lord Jesus!”