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**“Jesus Christ Before the Manger”**  
**The Doctrine of God the Son - Part 1**

Various Passages

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*There is a problem in Christendom. Consider the following from the article “Did Christ Rise from the Dead by Kenneth L. Woodward in the April 8th issue of Newsweek.*

*“ ... the battle for the spiritual imagination is never ending. Every generation reinterprets for itself the meaning of Jesus; it’s one way to keep faith—and its traditions—alive. While believers head for church and even lapsed Christians prepare holiday lambs, this season academics, most of them committed Christians, do battle. Over the past five years, scholars have published more than two dozen books and scores of footnoted articles, initiating a fierce debate over the Risen Jesus. In their relentless search for “the historical Jesus,” various Biblical scholars argue that the Gospel stories of the empty tomb and Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances are fictions devised long after his death to justify claims of his divinity. To hear them tell it, the Resurrection is an embarrassment to the modern mind and a dis-service to the itinerant Jewish preacher from rural Galilee.*

*Most Christians still believe in the Risen Jesus. For fundamentalists, the Bible is as good as its word, whichever translation happens to be in use. Since the Scriptures say Jesus returned physically from the dead, then that’s what happened. But very few Christians are literalists on this point, and among Christians there is a range of opinion on what the Resurrection means. For example, a Harris poll taken in 1994 found that 87 percent of Americans believe that Jesus was raised from the dead. But a survey conducted last month by the Barna Research Group, a conservative Christian organization in Glendale, Calif., finds that 30 percent of “born again” Christians do not believe that Jesus “came back to physical life after he was crucified.”*

*Nor does German New Testament scholar Gerd Ludemann, a visiting professor at Vanderbilt Divinity School. To him, the Resurrection is “an empty formula” that must be rejected by anyone holding a “scientific world view.” In his latest book, “What Really Happened to Jesus: A Historical Approach to the Resurrection” (147 pages. Westminster John Knox Press), Ludemann argues that Jesus’ body “rotted away” in the tomb. The Risen Christ that appeared to the Apostle Peter, according to Ludemann, whose book evoked a roar of protest from German Christians, was a subjective “vision” produced by Peter’s overwhelming grief and “guilt” for having denied Jesus when he was arrested. For the Apostle Paul, who had previously persecuted Christians, his vision of the Risen Jesus was the resolution of an unconscious “Christ complex.” And what the New Testament describes as Jesus’ appearance to “more than 500” followers was a “mass ecstasy.” In short, modern psychology reduces the Risen Christ to a series of interpsychic experiences that produced in the disciples a renewed sense of missionary zeal and spiritual self-confidence.*

*According to ... elaborate academic protocol, the Resurrection is ruled a priori out of court because it transcends time and space. Historians then have to find another reason to explain the origins of Christianity. Thus the Gospels’ narrative frame is discarded and the pieces of Scripture are reshuffled to reveal the scholar’s own “historical” Jesus. In some ways, this is what the Gospels do themselves. Each of them is a written composition that brings together parables and stories, events and theological assertions, that existed earlier only in oral form. Each offers different facets and insights into a figure who otherwise slips into the crevices of first-century Palestine. What holds these pieces together is the belief that the Risen Christ is living yet—a belief that many contemporary reconstructors do not share.”<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Woodward, Kenneth L. “Did Christ Rise from the Dead,” Newsweek, April 8, 1996.

*It seems that many claiming to be Christians have no idea of who Christ is. And while it is the Holy Spirit who convicts of truth, we do need to be able to speak succinctly from scripture about who our Lord.*

Pastor Verne has been examining some of the doctrines of the Church in an evening series. Since I have two Sundays, I thought instead of doing messages on the psalms, I'd take the opportunity to do a two part series on the Doctrine of God the Son.

This morning we'll examine the role of Jesus prior to the incarnation. Next week we will consider the incarnation and Jesus' ministry. As I have already noted, this is the foundation stone of the Church and even though well know to us, should nevertheless be considered as part of any doctrinal study.

This morning, we will examine Jesus' Old Covenant appearances (Christophanies), prophecies, and names. We will be able to marvel at the graciousness of a loving God, who has cared so much for us, His creatures that He provided a plan of restoration, of salvation even prior to the Fall.

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**The Godhead and Creation** — As we examine scripture, we state at the beginning, and this is the truth that Jesus was the creator.

*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made” (John 1:1-3).*

It is in this context that we understand that Jesus is co-eternal with the Father. He was not a later creation as some of the cults would have us believe, misunderstanding John 1:14.

*“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”*

What is most exciting for us, is the fact that the Father in His love prepared the plan of salvation to be worked out by the Son even before creation, much less the fall.

*“... the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world” (Revelation 13:8).*

This is the ultimate statement of God's, Jesus' love;

*“Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!” (Philippians 2:6-8).*

So the Creator took on the form of His creation as the way by which He communicates with His creatures. First though, He manifested Himself in the appearance of Humanity, and then at the incarnation He took on the very form of man.

**The appearances of Messiah** — Let us then look at a few of the pre-incarnate appearances of Jesus. Remember that in a number of these He is referred to as *“The Angel of the Lord.”*

- First we find Him in conversation with Abraham regarding the destruction of Sodom. *“The Lord appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day” (Genesis 18:1).* As we have seen His appearance was that of a man, which was later presumed to be an angel, but was clearly God Himself. Since God, the Father, is spirit only Christ takes on human form.
- Later God, at the site of the planned sacrifice of Isaac, again appeared to Abraham. *“... the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, “Abraham! Abraham!” “Here I am,” he replied. “Do not lay a hand on the boy,” he said. “Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son” ” (Genesis 22:12).*
- Just as Jesus appeared to Abraham, so He did to both Isaac and Jacob. *“The LORD appeared to Isaac and said, “Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land where I tell you to live. Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham. I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because Abraham obeyed me and kept my requirements, my commands, my decrees and my laws” ” (Genesis 26:2-5).*
- *“So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. Then the man said, “Let me go, for it is daybreak” But Jacob replied, “I will not let you go unless you bless me.” The man asked him, “What is your name?” “Jacob,” he answered. Then the man said, “Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome.” Jacob said, “Please tell me your name.” But he replied, “Why do you ask my name?” Then he blessed him there. So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, “It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared”” (Genesis 32:24-30).*
- And according to Paul, Moses was confronted by Jesus in the wilderness. God speaking to Moses said, *“I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink.” So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel.”* As Paul notes; *“...for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ” (Exodus 17:6; 1 Corinthians 10:4).*
- There are other appearances of Jesus in the Old Covenant, but let’s note just two more in passing. First, to Joshua; *“Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, “Are you for us or for our enemies?” “Neither,” he replied, “but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come.” Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, “What message does my Lord have for his servant?” The commander of the Lord's army replied, “Take off your sandals, for the*

*place where you are standing is holy.' And Joshua did so" (Joshua 5:13-15). Note that actions and commands of the Captain were the actions of God.*

- Jesus also appeared to Isaiah. *"In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty." Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!" "* (Isaiah 6:1, 5, 8).

**The prophecies related to Messiah** — Now let's examine just a very few of the Old Covenant prophecies of the coming Messiah.

- The first is one of the most familiar: And God spoke, *"... I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel" (Genesis 3:15).* With the fall came the hope of restoration between people and the Father, through the work of the Son. This seed can be traced from Adam, to Abraham, and on through Jacob into the tribe of Judah in the nation Israel.
- And once the promise comes to Judah we find it specifically identified with the line of David and the town of Bethlehem. *"When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men. But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you." ... "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times" (2 Samuel 7:12-15; Micah 5:2).*
- One of the most important prophecies relates to the nature of the Incarnation, supernatural. And this was the promise of the virgin birth. *"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14).*

**The names of Messiah** — The names of Messiah are in both the Old and New Covenant.

- The first and most familiar is Jesus. He received this one through the instructions of Gabriel. This is the Greek form of the Hebrew Joshua, or Yeshua and means Yahweh Our Saviour. *"She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." ... "You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus" (Matthew 1:21; Luke 1:31).*
- Next is His title, Christ, the Greek for Messiah or Hamashiach, meaning the anointed one. *"Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.' It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble."*

... *“The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ).” (Daniel 9:25; John 1:41).*

- Jesus is called Lord. *“That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord (Yahweh, God, Master),” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9).*
- Jesus is the great I AM. *““I tell you the truth,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!” ” (John 8:58).*
- Jesus is called the Son of God. *“The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.”” ... “The Jews insisted, “We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God.”” (Luke 1:35; John 19:7).*
- Praise the Lord, Jesus is called Immanuel, meaning God with us. Again, *“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.” ... “The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel—which means, “God with us.”” (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23).*
- Jesus is the Living Word. *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning” (John 1:1-2).*
- Jesus is Saviour. Again, *“She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” ... “Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord” (Matthew 1:21; Luke 2:11).*

There are other names which can be looked up, if you so desire: The Only Begotten Son, The Alpha and Omega, Lord of Glory, Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The ancient of Days, Son of Abraham, Son of David, and many more.

And so the most important thing we can learn is that The Lord Jesus Christ is truly God and truly man. He is God’s ultimate statement of His love of us His creation and His desire to restore the fellowship with us that was lost at the fall.

We have seen that God the Son was not limited in His appearances to the New Covenant, but is also present in the Old, and that it is His fulfillment of so many prophecies found there that is one of the foundation stones of our confidence in those yet to be fulfilled.

Because Jesus can in the first incarnation, we can be confident of His coming in again.

*“For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18).*

*“After 150 years of scholarly search, there are signs that the quest for the “historical” Jesus has reached a dead end. There have been no new data on the person of Jesus since the Gospels were written. And though scholars continue to piece together information from archaeology and other disciplines, these are valuable chiefly for fashioning a better understanding of Christian origins and how the Gospels, in particular, were composed. In the best of the recent flow of books, “The Real Jesus” (182 pages. HarperCollins), Emory’s Luke Timothy Johnson offers a devastating critique of those scholars who prefer their own reconstructed Jesuses to the one attested to in the New Testament. As Johnson demonstrates, truth is not always historical, and what seems warranted by historical evidence does not always turn out to be true. Unfortunately, apart from what is found in Scripture, there is little that one can say about the identity of Jesus. Like Socrates, Jesus is inscribed in the words of those who wrote about him. And all of them proclaimed his Resurrection from the dead.”<sup>2</sup>*

It seems that maybe somebody will realize that we have truth, the truth of the witnesses and so called scholars some two thousand years later don’t have the wisdom to realize that they don’t know better than those who were on the scene.

### **Psalm 24**

*Of David. A psalm.*

*The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it,  
the world, and all who live in it;  
for he founded it upon the seas  
and established it upon the waters.*

*Who may ascend the hill of the Lord?  
Who may stand in his holy place?  
He who has clean hands and a pure heart,  
who does not lift up his soul to an idol  
or swear by what is false.  
He will receive blessing from the Lord  
and vindication from God his Saviour.  
Such is the generation of those who seek him,  
who seek your face, O God of Jacob.*

*Selah*

*Lift up your heads, O you gates;  
be lifted up, you ancient doors,  
that the King of glory may come in.  
Who is this King of glory?  
The Lord strong and mighty,  
the Lord mighty in battle.  
Lift up your heads, O you gates;  
lift them up, you ancient doors,  
that the King of glory may come in.  
Who is he, this King of glory?*

*The Lord Almighty—he is the King of glory.*

*Selah*

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

**“Jesus Christ Before the Manager”**  
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Various Passages

**The Godhead & Creation**  
The Beginning

God’s Love

**The Pre-incarnate Appearances of the Messiah**  
Abraham

Isaac & Jacob

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In the Beginning

The Line of David

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**The Names of the Messiah**

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Christ

Lord

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