

# Christian Doctrine

## #1 - Our Need for a Savior

*It is not the healthy who need a doctor but the sick (Matthew 9:12).*

The primary purpose of the law (summarized in The Ten Commandments which we've just studied) is to show us that we need help, to bring us to the conviction that we're in trouble with God for not obeying his will and that there's nothing we can do to get ourselves out of trouble with God. The person who feels or sees no spiritual sickness naturally won't be interested to hear about spiritual healing. The person who doesn't perceive himself to be lost will think it strange to be told that he's been found. The person who perceives himself to be in no peril or danger has no need of hearing that he's been rescued. To the person who does not believe that he has sinned, does not believe that his sins have separated him from God, does not believe that he has deserved God's eternal punishment of hell, the idea of trusting that God has delivered, saved and rescued him will seem absurd.

"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick."

In his Word God makes it clear that we are spiritually sick. Because we are all born with sin, we cannot supply the perfect obedience which God demands. Therefore, no one, not even a Christian, keeps God's law well enough to get into heaven. Rather, we have sinned and have earned the punishment of eternal death and damnation. Only God himself could save us from that. And God did!

## #2 - Sin and Grace

God would have had every right to wipe Adam and Eve off the face of the earth once they sinned. But he didn't. Subsequently, through every period of human history, God has continuously been given every good reason not to care about the people of the world. Since the Fall into sin, God has been rejected, spurned and forsaken in every possible way.

*Ah, sinful nation, a people loaded with guilt, a brood of evildoers, children given to corruption! They have forsaken the LORD; they have spurned the Holy One of Israel and turned their backs on him (Isaiah 1:4).*

## #3 - Sin and Grace

Yet, it is God's nature to show love to people who do not deserve love, to show kindness to people who do not deserve kindness, to call to himself people who have turned their backs on him. The Bible says that God is a God of grace. He has shown all people his undeserved love.

*But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved (Ephesians 2:4-5).*

## #4 - God's plan in greater detail

God had originally promised to Adam and Eve that one of Eve's physical descendants would crush the devil's power. As the years passed, God revealed more and more of the details about the Savior he planned to send. The virgin birth of a Savior who would be no less than God himself and Bethlehem as the place of his birth were two important pieces of information that God gave his people.

*The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14).*

*"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" (Micah 5:2).*

**#5 - God's plan in greater detail**

The one chosen and promised by God would come as a humble, gentle king, riding a lowly pack animal and bringing salvation to God's people. He would come as a suffering servant. He would suffer pain and intense anguish and be cursed by God, all so that the favor of the Lord might rest on all people.

*Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey (Zechariah 9:9).*

*But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed (Isaiah 53:5).*

**#6 - God's plan fulfilled**

God kept his promise of sending a Savior.

*But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons (Galatians 4:4-5).*

Some amazing things happened when God's time for the arrival of his chosen deliverer finally came.

God chose a priest named Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth to be the parents of a son (John the Baptist) who would announce that Jesus was coming (cf. Malachi 3:1). This birth was miraculous in and of itself, since Zechariah and Elizabeth were well past child-bearing years. For the angel Gabriel's announcement to Zechariah of the birth of a son and forerunner of the Savior, read Luke 1:5-25.

Six months later, Gabriel was sent to a young woman named Mary. God's promise of sending a human descendant of Eve to crush the devil's power was now to be realized. For the announcement to Mary that she would give birth to the Savior, read Luke 1:26-38.

After she had heard Gabriel's astounding announcement, Mary traveled to visit her relative Elizabeth, who was six months pregnant with John the Baptist. Miraculously, John the Baptist leaped inside Elizabeth's womb when Mary's unborn child Jesus came into Elizabeth's presence. Soon after, John the Baptist was born to old, barren Elizabeth. Read Luke 1:39-80.

Poor Joseph! Wedding customs of the day dictated that those who were to spend their lives together as husband and wife would first have a public ceremony at which they spoke their wedding promises to each other. The man and woman would not live (or sleep) together until a later time. Then, at this later time (at the time of the wedding reception), the groom would come to the party to take home his bride, a bride to whom he was already legally married, and they would then consummate the marriage and live together as husband and wife.

Poor Joseph! Already legally married to Mary, he finds, upon her return from relative Elizabeth's, that she is pregnant. His only logical deduction is that she has become pregnant by another man. God sends an angel to explain things to Joseph. By keeping Joseph and Mary together, the Lord thus insures that Mary would be cared for and that Jesus would have a stepfather as guardian. Read Matthew 1:18-25.

The account of God's Son becoming fully human is in Luke 2:1-20.

*In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to his own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great company of the heavenly*

*host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.” When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.” So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.*

The birth of Jesus is an historical fact. While we are not absolutely certain of the year, 6 - 4 B.C. is a reasonable estimate. Nor are we certain of the date of his birth. History seems to indicate that Christians chose December 25<sup>th</sup> to counter the pagan celebration of the winter solstice.

We are clearly told that Mary and Joseph did not have sexual relations “until she gave birth to a son” (Matthew 1:25). The virginity of Mary up to the time of Christ’s birth is scripturally verified. The word of God does not teach the perpetual virginity of Mary. Mention of Christ’s brothers and sisters seems to be a literal reference to half-siblings. After the miraculous conception of Christ, Mary’s pregnancy and Jesus’ birth were normal in every way. There was a live childbirth in Bethlehem’s stable long ago. Scripture nowhere tells us that Mary was spared the physical discomforts of ordinary child-bearing.

#### #7 - Jesus’ Person

##### Human Nature

*For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5),  
 “Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have” (Luke 24:39).  
 After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry (Matthew 4:2).  
 Jesus wept (John 11:35).*

##### Divine Nature

*We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true – even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life (1 John 5:20).  
 Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28)!  
 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever (Hebrews 13:8).  
 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made (John 1:3).  
 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy (Colossians 1:15-18).  
 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, “Why does this fellow talk like that? He’s blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?” Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, “Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat and walk’? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins....” He said to the paralytic, “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home” (Mark 2:5-11).  
 Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him (John 5:22-23).*

##### God-Man

*For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form (Colossians 2:9).*

Jesus is Man	Jesus is God
We needed to keep all of God’s law perfectly to qualify for eternal life. To be our substitute and keep God’s law for us, Jesus had to take on a human nature, so that he could be subject to the same laws of God to which we human beings are subject.	To keep God’s law perfectly for us, Jesus also had to be divine, for no human being is able to keep God’s law perfectly. By virtue of his divinity Jesus was willing and able to obey all of God's commands for us and throughout his life he did.
We deserved to die for our offenses against God. To be our substitute and die for us, Jesus had to take on a human nature, so that he could die the very same death which all human beings now experience since Adam’s Fall into sin.	No human being can live or die for another human being. So that his fulfilling of the law might be sufficient for all people, and so that his death might be a sufficient ransom price to purchase all people for God, Jesus also had to be divine.

#8 - Name above all names: Jesus

<u>Greek</u>	<u>Hebrew</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
Jesus	Joshua	“The Lord saves”

#9 - Name above all names: Christ

<u>Greek</u>	<u>Hebrew</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
Christ	Messiah	“The anointed one”

#10 - Name above all names

Christ Jesus - The one God chose to save us

#11 - Even at the young age of twelve, Jesus was fully aware of the mission his Father had given him. His high regard for the scriptures is one part of how he came to take our place and to keep God’s law for us. By undergoing a baptism that he himself didn’t need (he had no sins to be washed away), Jesus made it plainly clear that he was joining the ranks of the human race, to take the place of every human being.

#12 - Jesus showed his love both for children and for adults by blessing them and teaching them that he had come to bring them forgiveness from God and that they were children of their heavenly Father through faith in him.

#13 - Jesus healed the sick and raised the dead as signs that he was truly the divine Savior sent to rescue all human beings from being punished for their sins.

#14 - After three years of preaching and teaching and performing miracles, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey (Palm Sunday), knowing full well that his enemies there would carry out their plan to have him killed. As he celebrated the Passover with his disciples for the last time (Maundy Thursday), Jesus also instituted the Lord’s Supper.

#15 - In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed for strength to bear the sins of the world and the curse of his heavenly Father. God sent an angel and strengthened him to go forward as the sacrificial lamb. Jesus’ disciple Judas betrayed him to his enemies with a kiss.

#16 - After his own countrymen condemned him to death, Jesus appeared before the Roman governor Pontius Pilate.

#17 - Once condemned to death, Jesus carried his own cross to the place of execution.

#18 - On a hill outside Jerusalem, they crucified him.

#19 - Lifted up

*Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life (John 3:14-15).*

#20 - Jesus suffered the pain of hell itself as he was forsaken by his Father. Out of love for us God the Father cursed Jesus as if he were every sinner in the world all wrapped up in one.

#21 - Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea took Jesus body down from the cross. Jesus' corpse was placed in Joseph's new, unused tomb.

#22 - Jesus' Active Obedience

In his active obedience, Jesus did in our place what we were not able to do for ourselves. He loved his Father above all and loved others as himself. He fully and perfectly obeyed all of God's commandments without fail. During his life on earth, having assumed a human nature and being under obligation to keep God's laws, he kept God's laws perfectly – he always put God first, never misused but always rightly used God's name, never despised but always had the highest regard for God's Word, never dishonored but always obeyed and respected his mother Mary and his step-father Joseph, never hated people to the point of murder but loved people to the point of showing them unending kindness, never had impure sexual thoughts and never committed sexually immoral acts but was always sexually pure in thought, word and deed, never stole or wasted but always worked hard to help his neighbor, never gossiped or lied to hurt others but always defended the good name of his neighbor, never coveted but always had pure and holy desires.

#23 - Jesus' Active Obedience

Jesus actively obeyed his Father's will by keeping all of God's commands in our place. Even Jesus' most bitter enemies could not answer his challenge:

*“Can any of you prove me guilty of sin” (John 8:46)?*

*But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin (1 John 3:5).*

*Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them (Matthew 5:17).*

*For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin (Hebrews 4:15).*

We owed God lives of perfect obedience. We had failed to pay that debt. God's Son became a man to pay that debt for us. His perfect life is credited to all people, including us. In doing that, Jesus regained for us the blessings our first father Adam had lost:

*Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous (Romans 5:18-19).*

*But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ – the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead (Philippians 3:7-11).*

In his active obedience, Jesus lived the life of an obedient servant, dedicated entirely to doing the will of his heavenly Father in service to sinful dying human beings. In his active obedience, Jesus did the good we had left undone.

Eternal life through faith in Jesus is often thought to be a matter of subtraction – God has taken away our sins. We do well to remember, however, that our salvation also involves addition. While sin and guilt have been taken away, righteousness (being holy in the sight of God) has been given. By living without sinning, Jesus was procuring our salvation during all his years on earth, including the "silent years" from age twelve through thirty. Because Jesus kept all of God's laws perfectly as our substitute, God looks at each of us "just-as-if-we'd-obeyed-all-of-God's-commands."

#### #24 - Jesus' Passive Obedience

Jesus passively obeyed his Father's will by letting the punishment for our sins fall on him. Being sinless, Jesus did not deserve to suffer or die. Yet, when he was about thirty-three years old, opposition to himself, his ministry and his message had mounted to the point of hatred and plots on the part of the Jewish leaders to kill him. On Palm Sunday, he rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, symbolic of a mission of peace, and the crowds received him enthusiastically. Thursday night of the same week he celebrated the Passover with his disciples, a meal which was to remind God's people of how they had been delivered from the bondage of Egyptian slavery. That same night he celebrated the first Lord's Supper. Judas Iscariot, one of his own disciples, then betrayed Jesus' over to the hostile Jewish leaders, who invented charges against him which, in their opinion, made him worthy of death. Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, was the man whose approval was needed so that the Jews could carry out the death sentence. After beatings from the Roman soldiers in addition to what the Jews had already inflicted on him, Jesus was led outside the city to a hill having the appearance of a skull and there crucified. Why?

*But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed (Isaiah 53:5).*

*He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2).*

*No man can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for him – the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough – (Psalm 49:7-8).*

*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree" (Galatians 3:13).*

*From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land. About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" - which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me" (Matthew 27:45-46).*

The suffering and death Jesus experienced was the payment God demanded for the sins of the entire world. In grace God removed from us the guilt of our sins and placed it on Jesus. God made Jesus guilty of our sins and punished and killed his own Son in our place. Jesus' death was the payment price for every sin of every human being who has ever lived, who is living now, and who ever will live.

While he was hanging on the cross, before he died, Jesus suffered the real torment of hell itself – complete separation from God. Jesus was on the cross for six hours. While there was great pain in being crucified and while crucified convicts usually died by suffocation, the agony greater than all his physical suffering was the agony of soul Jesus experienced as he carried the load of the world's sin and guilt. Ultimately, he then died in the middle of the afternoon of what we now call Good Friday. Although his body was fully dead when it was placed in the tomb, it did not experience any decay (Psalm 16:10).

In his passive obedience, Jesus suffered in our place the punishment we deserved to suffer for our sins. He took in his own body the punishment the sinful world deserved. He willingly endured the sufferings and death which his Father prescribed for him instead of us. He undid the evil we had done. Because Jesus endured the punishment we deserved and died as our substitute, God has declared us debt-free and looks at each of us "just-as-if-we'd-already-been-punished-for-our-sins."

**#25 - God's Great Exchange**

*God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21).*

Theologians like Martin Luther and others have seen in this active and passive obedience of Christ a wonderful exchange.

**#26 - God's Great Exchange**

While Jesus had no sin and was never guilty of a single sin, our sins and the sins of the entire world were credited to him and he willingly let himself be punished for them (his passive obedience). In exchange, God has credited Jesus' death to our account and considers our debt of sin fully paid. On the flip side, while we are sinful, have sinned continuously, and have never come close to keeping all of God's commands perfectly, Jesus' perfect observance of the commandments (his active obedience) has been credited to us. This great exchange is full and free and for everyone. It is God's grace at its fullest expression. It is the only true resolution to the problem of our guilt before God. This great exchange alone brings true joy and peace to the heart and brings meaning and purpose into every believer's life.

**#27 - Jesus' humiliation: He humbled himself to redeem us.**

This first stage of Jesus' life, the vast majority of the time he spent visibly on earth as the God-man, as we have now reviewed it in this lesson, is referred to as Jesus' state of humiliation. The state of humiliation is that period of time which began when Jesus' human body was conceived by the Holy Spirit and which lasted until the afternoon when his lifeless body was lowered into Joseph's garden grave. The term humiliation has nothing directly to do with the way his enemies humiliated him, although the term is related to our word "humble." During those 33 years Jesus did not at any time or in any way stop being God. He always was, still is, and always will be true God. When Jesus lived visibly in our world, however, he did not always or fully make use of the divine power and characteristics which as God were his to use. Though he always had them, he did not use them.

Whatever Jesus did during his earthly life he did as true God and true man in one person. His divine nature was never separated from his human nature. Because Jesus was fully human he could come onto the human scene and carry out the role of a servant, doing everything human beings had been created to do, suffering everything the human race deserved to suffer. Because Jesus was fully God, what he accomplished was sufficient for all people in the whole world.

