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READING ASSIGNMENT FOR STUDENTS TO BE READ BEFORE MEETING FOR LESSON 4

THIS WEEK'S READING: Use a highlighter to underscore portions that “jump out at you”, give new insight, which you may like to further study- or ask questions of in your GROUP.

Chapter 4: The Handbook of Doctrine God's eternal Son The doctrine of Jesus Christ

We believe that in the person of Jesus Christ the Divine and human natures are united, so that he is truly and properly God and truly and properly man.

Faith in Jesus is so central to “who we are” that our very identity as individuals and as a community is wrapped with his name: “CHRIST-ian”, Christ followers, those who walk in Christ's footsteps, His disciples, Christ-likeness- our desire (Romans 10:9-13)...we are to be His witnesses-our mission.

Through our understanding of the Trinity we see each dimension of the godhead working seamlessly; Jesus, God's Son who reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit. It begins and ends with love. The Father desperately loves his children-each person he has created; standing in stark contrast with the stories and legends of pseudo-divine “object of worship “appearing in every culture throughout history whose purpose was to control, punish or abuse mankind. Love is at the heart of Jesus' coming to rescue a fallen world.

God's perfect will and his purpose are seen as Jesus came to earth as a fragile infant, as he walked beside mankind experiencing joy, pain and sorrow from the inside out. He knows and understands what it is to be human because he was truly human.

Jesus the man

Our doctrine speaks of Jesus as ‘truly and properly God and truly and properly man’. As we explore this mystery, we look first at Jesus of Nazareth, who was truly human, and whose story is recorded for us in the Gospels.

Jesus, who walked among us-was indeed a historical figure. He lived 2,000 years ago, and the Gospels as well as other outside historical, archaeological and literary sources tell us about the One who “walked among us”. He lived in Palestine at a time when Israel was under Roman rule/the Roman Empire. The account of his birth in Luke 2:1-7 chronicles customs, edicts, geographic locations and events linked to the historic rule of Caesar Augustus. Other ancient manuscripts mention Jesus of Nazareth, his life, ministry and death on a cross. When we read through the gospels we understand that these must be seen in context with the times and culture in which he lived, while on a larger scale knowing that his universal message and ministry broke through the boundaries of Judaism. Jesus was a historic person who lived in the Jewish/Roman world of the first century AD. This is important to us to comprehend, for if he did not live as a man he could not die for our salvation or be raised by God. If we fail to see the Jesus of history, we cannot grasp the Christ of our faith (1 Timothy 3:16; John 17:1-5).

*** Jesus was a real human being**

We believe that Jesus' true humanity is clearly revealed in the Bible.

LOOK-UP: In what ways do you see Jesus human characteristics?

Mark 11:12 Mark 1:41 John 4:6 John 11:35 Luke 2:52 Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13

He was fully human. Because Jesus was human- he stands as living with a personal freedom and moral integrity, as having a love for God that reached out to all those around him; showing us the “zoa” abundant life that God desires for each of us to have. This is what it means to live as we were truly created...true mankind that reaches back to the Father 100% in love and obedience.

***However, He stands out as a very unique human being**

We are witnesses to the life of Christ as lived without sin. In this, certainly He stands alone. (Hebrews 4:15). The very closeness of Jesus' relationship as God's divine Son exposed him more intensely to all the realities of the temptations placed before him. He felt a depth of conflict with the powers of darkness knowing the fullness of their reality and presence. When confronted with suffering and death he saw these through the eyes of eternity and measured them out against his love for us, and ultimately his obedience to the Father (I Peter 2:21-25).

***Jesus in undeniably God's Son**

Jesus Christ was not only truly man, but 'truly and properly God'. 'He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made' (John 1:2, 3). This is a huge concept to grasp: that WHO God is-is fully infused and present in the life of Jesus in human form. Jesus, himself says that "'He who has seen me has seen the Father' (John 14:9).

There is a word that the early Christian leaders created to capture this doctrinal truth, "incarnation," which literally means "in the flesh". This is one doctrine you CANNOT get wrong... or it changes the whole of what you believe. When Jesus is less than God, a teacher or prophet standing on his own, is merely a historic figure, or is spirit only- people devise a whole new application of what it looks like to follow Christ. We seem to have the innate ability to get off track or swayed by outer influences so easily when we move away from solid doctrine.

The Council of Chalcedon convened in 451 with leaders who were fully aware of confusion that was rising up in some of the local churches regarding Christ's identity. New sects and teachings began appearing with leaders who came to their own conclusions based on partial truths. This needed to be challenged before Early Christianity became so intermingled with culture and philosophy that it lost what made it true in the first place. *Today we still see leaders who take their congregations in wildly different directions based on "their" new discovery.

The Council prayed and studied Scripture, searching for the truth of the whole instead of looking at one passage to define Christ. What they discovered, they wrote in the form of a doctrine that states that:

Jesus is God in the flesh...God became one of us, though without sin. (John 1:14- 'the Word became flesh and lived for a while among us'; Philippians 2:6, 7- Christ, 'being in very nature God' and yet 'taking the very nature of a servant'"). He is spoken of, in Colossians, as being the 'image of the invisible God' who holds 'all things together' and whom God has made the way for men and women to be "reconciled, through his blood, shed on the cross' (Colossians 1:15-20). Jesus Christ is described as 'the radiance of God's glory and exact representation of his being' (Hebrews 1:3) and titles are taken from the language of the Old and New Testaments to explain how God's Son, Jesus Christ...is fully man and fully divine.

***Who was born of a virgin**

In the Gospels of Matthew and Luke we read about the conception of Jesus by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:18; Luke 1:35). Like all human beings, Jesus was born of a woman, Mary, whose obedience to God opened the way for his outpouring of grace in the person of Jesus (Luke 1:35-38). But Jesus' person, life and character cannot be explained solely in terms of human heredity. God was at work in Jesus from the moment of conception. This conviction is bound up with his conception by the Holy Spirit and his birth to Mary, usually referred to as the doctrine of the Virgin Birth. This illuminates our understanding of the nature of the Lord Jesus Christ. It asserts his divinity as well as his advent in time as a man, made in the image of God. It reminds us that Jesus is both like us and unlike us.

Jesus Christ our Lord

'Jesus is Lord' is the earliest creedal statement found in the New Testament (Philippians 2:11). It testifies to the deity of Jesus Christ, that he is one with the Father, sharing the Father's very being and fulfilling the Father's mission (Matthew 3:17, 17:5; Luke 5:1-11). The disciples recognized in their risen and ascended Lord the true image, presence and power of God (John 20:26-28). Through their experience they realized that worship given to him was as given to God. The confession that Jesus is Lord is the mark of the true Christian believer, for 'everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved' (Romans 10:13; cf Joel 2:32).

***Salvation through Jesus**

Christianity is a historical faith. The New Testament, especially the four Gospels, tells the history of Jesus. The major creeds also provide an outline of his life. To tell the story of Jesus is to preach the gospel, for the Christian faith is based upon what actually happened in the life, death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The public ministry of Jesus followed his baptism in the River Jordan. Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus set out to teach and to preach the good news of the Kingdom (Mark 1:14). He taught that the time had come for God's reign to be established: his very coming had brought the Kingdom near. All people, especially the poor and the marginalized, were invited to share in the celebrations (Luke 4:16-21). With great authority, he called disciples to follow him (Mark 1:16-20; Mark 2:13-17). He healed the sick and oppressed (Matthew 4:23-25; Mark 1:29-34). He challenged and defeated the power of evil as a sign of the coming Kingdom (Mark 1:21-28; Luke 11:14-23). But Jesus' actions also challenged the religious authorities of his day, who sought to kill him (Mark 2:23-3:6).

Jesus believed that his suffering and death were within the will and purposes of God and did not yield to the temptation to avoid their bitterness (Mark 14:32-42; John 12:27, 28). Thus, the death of Jesus was no accident or tragic mistake. Jesus did not give up his life as a victim suffering for a cause. He died on the Cross fully trusting that through his death, and by his obedience, the purposes of God would be fulfilled (Matthew 16:21-23; Mark 8:31-33; Luke 9:22). His arrest and trial by the religious authorities, the death sentence imposed by the Roman government, the terrible crucifixion he endured, his death and burial in a borrowed grave – these were not the meaningless events they appeared to be at the time to his followers (Matthew 26:47–27:56; Mark 14:43–15:41; Luke 22:47–23:49; John 18:1–19:37). Though they were due to the actions of sinful people, it became evident that God was at work through Jesus in all that happened, and the offering of his life was God’s gift to the world (John 10:17, 18; 11:49-52; Acts 2:22, 23; Romans 5:15-19).

The death of Jesus was not the end of the story. The whole New Testament resounds with the proclamation that God raised Jesus from the dead (Matthew 28:5, 6; Mark 16:1-7; Luke 24:1-9; John 20:1-18; Acts 2:32; 1 Corinthians 15:3, 4). The Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ in bodily form turned apparent failure into triumph and confirmed the power of self-giving love over evil and death. God’s transforming presence brought life out of death: Jesus is exalted as Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36).

The New Testament presents the Resurrection as the fulfilment of prophecy (Luke 24:46). The empty tomb and post-resurrection encounters with the believers give witness to its truth. In the Resurrection, the Kingdom of God bursts through by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is also our assurance of life to come in all the fullness that God wills for us.

No satisfactory explanation of the birth of Christianity can be given without taking seriously the conviction born in the disciples that their Lord was raised from the dead. The existence of the

Church, Christ’s living Body on earth, is evidence of his risen life. The Ascension of the Lord Jesus signified the end of the post resurrection appearances recorded in the Gospels, and the return of the Son to the glory eternally shared with the Father and the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:50-52; Acts 1:9-11). It also prepared for the Church’s understanding of Christ’s continuing ministry as intercessor in Heaven. The return of Christ is an integral part of the gospel as proclaimed in the New Testament (Matthew 25:31-46; 26:64). Jesus himself warned against speculation about dates and times, but we look forward expectantly to Christ’s ultimate triumph; we pray for his return and prepare ourselves for the consummation of God’s purposes through the return of his Son (Matthew 6:10; 1 Corinthians 15:23, 24; Colossians 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4; Revelation 22:7, 20; Chapter 11).

Our salvation, our mission

The life, death and Resurrection of Jesus proclaim the reality of our redemption.

Jesus’ whole life centered on his relationship with God the Father. He lived in the joy of God’s presence and trusted him so completely that his life was fully open to those around him. He loved God wholeheartedly and was completely obedient to his will, even to the point of suffering and death. It is this kind of self-forgetfulness that is the real measure of human wholeness. In the example of Jesus we see our pattern for living (John 13:12-17).

The loving obedience of Jesus was the means through which God reconciled the world to himself (Romans 5:10, 11; 2 Corinthians 5:18, 19; Colossians 1:20). We are part of that world. Salvation is to accept that gift of reconciliation, so that, associated with, and transformed by, his death and risen life, we may share the fruits of his self-giving (John 3:16).

Our mission is to share in the mission of God; to tell the story of Jesus and the reconciliation he offers with compelling passion so that other people recognize within it the source of their own salvation.

Jesus Christ, God’s eternal Son, was conceived by Mary through the Holy Spirit. In him humanity and deity are united. He lived a perfect life, died an atoning death, rose from the dead and lives at the right hand of the Father; he intercedes for his people and will return in power and glory.

THE CHART BELOW IS FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION.

It shows Old and New Testament scriptures side by side as they reveal the truth of Christ's identity

JESUS	AS	GOD, "YAHWEH"
<p>John 1:3, "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made."</p> <p>Col. 1:16-17, "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."</p>	<p>Creator</p>	<p>Job 33:4, "The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life."</p> <p>Isaiah 40:28, "Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom."</p>
<p>Rev. 1:17, "When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: 'Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last.'"</p> <p>Rev. 2:8, "To the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again."</p> <p>Rev. 22:13, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End."</p>	<p>First and Last</p>	<p>Isaiah 41:4, "Who has done this and carried it through, calling forth the generations from the beginning? I, the LORD--with the first of them and with the last--I am he."</p> <p>Isaiah 44:6, "This is what the LORD says--Israel's King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God."</p> <p>Isaiah 48:12, "Listen to me, O Jacob, Israel, whom I have called: I am he; I am the first and I am the last."</p>
<p>John 8:24, "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins." (NKJV)</p> <p>John 8:58, "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!" See Exodus 3:14</p> <p>John 13:19, "I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am He."</p>	<p>I AM"ego eimi"</p>	<p>Exodus 3:14, "God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"</p> <p>Isaiah 43:10, "You are my witnesses," declares the LORD, "and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me." See also Deut. 32:39</p>
<p>2 Tim. 4:1, "In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge . . ."</p> <p>2 Cor. 5:10, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad."</p>	<p>Judge</p>	<p>Joel 3:12, "Let the nations be roused; let them advance into the Valley of Jehoshaphat, for there I will sit to judge all the nations on every side."</p> <p>Rom. 14:10, "You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat."</p>
<p>Matt. 2:2, ". . . Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."</p> <p>Luke 23:3, "So Pilate asked Jesus, "Are you the king of the Jews?" "Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied." See also John 19:21</p>	<p>King</p>	<p>Jer. 10:10, "But the LORD is the true God; he is the living God, the eternal King. When he is angry, the earth trembles; the nations cannot endure his wrath."</p> <p>Isaiah 44:6-8, "This is what the LORD says--Israel's King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God." See also Psalm 47</p>
<p>John 8:12, "When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."</p> <p>Luke 2:32, "a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." See also John 1:7-9</p>	<p>Light</p>	<p>Psalm 27:1, "The LORD is my light and my salvation -- whom shall I fear?"</p> <p>Isaiah 60:20, "our sun will never set again, and your moon will wane no more; the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your days of sorrow will end."</p> <p>1 John 1:5, "God is light; in him there is no darkness at all."</p>
<p>1 Cor. 10:4, ". . . for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ." See also 1 Pet. 2:4-8.</p>	<p>Rock</p>	<p>Deut. 32:4, "He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he." See also 2 Sam. 22:32 and Isaiah 17:10.</p>
<p>John 4:42, "They said to the woman, 'We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.'"</p> <p>1 John 4:14, "And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world."</p>	<p>Savior</p>	<p>Isaiah 43:3, "For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior"</p> <p>Isaiah 45:21, ". . . And there is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me."</p>
<p>John 10:11, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."</p> <p>Heb. 13:20, "May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep . . ."</p> <p>See also John 10:14, 16; 1 Pet. 2:25</p>	<p>Shepherd</p>	<p>Psalm 23:1, "The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want."</p> <p>Isaiah 40:11, "He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young."</p>

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*note: The chart above displays scriptures only- without promotion of theology or viewpoint.