

Chapter 11: The Birth of the Messiah, Jesus Christ

A week later, Professor Ho welcomed Xiao Wang and Xiao Li back to his office. “Well boys, today at last I’d like to start looking with you at who Jesus is. There’s no one else in all of history like Him—and no one half as important.” Without knowing it, Professor Ho’s entire face brightened into a wide smile as he said those words. He was remembering how coming to know Jesus had changed his own life, remembering how it had felt to realize and feel that Jesus loved *him*. The long and even tedious examination of evidence had all been to get to this point: so that Xiao Wang would be able to believe, would have the chance to know Jesus and experience His love.

“Let’s briefly review what we discussed last week.” [See Chapter 10.] Professor Ho ticked off his points on his fingers. “We’ve seen that the historicity of Jesus and the early church is confirmed by non-Christian historical witnesses. We’ve seen that the New Testament texts are early and accurate—first century, beyond any reasonable doubt, and correct in their historical details. We’ve seen that the texts have been transmitted accurately. And we’ve seen the early church carefully sifted later writings that falsely claimed apostolic authorship. Now, let’s begin to examine the portrait of Jesus which the New Testament gives us.”

[Here it is suggested that the reader read Matthew chapters 1-2 and Luke chapters 1-3.]

When was Jesus born?

“Like every other real historical figure, Jesus Christ was born at a specific time and place.”

“Don’t we number years from His birth?” asked Xiao Li.

Professor Ho nodded, “Correct—or, almost correct! About 500 years after Jesus, a Christian monk began the tradition of numbering years from the birth of Jesus. In this system, the years since His birth were called in the Latin language ‘anno domini,’ which means ‘the year of our Lord.’ The phrase is abbreviated as ‘A.D.’ In English, the years before Jesus was born came to be called ‘before Christ,’ abbreviated as ‘B.C.’ The system was first adopted in Europe, then spread to the entire world during the last hundred years or so. More recently, secularists who resent any reference to Jesus have been replacing ‘A.D.’ and ‘B.C.’ with ‘C.E.’ or ‘common era’ and ‘B.C.E.’ or ‘before common era.’ Those, of course, are the terms we have used in China since 1949. But we’re still counting the years from Jesus’s birth—or almost!”

“What do you mean, ‘almost’?” Xiao Li asked.

“Unfortunately, the monk got his date wrong by a couple of years. The system assumes Jesus was born in 1 AD, but actually He was born a little earlier, probably sometime 6—4 BC.”

“How do you know?” queried Xiao Wang.

c.2165BC	Abraham born
c.1041BC	David born
c.6-4BC	Jesus born*
c.4BC	Herod dies**

*some say 7-2BC
**some say as late as 2BC

“Because of the names of the rulers mentioned by the gospel writers,” Professor Ho explained, pointing to his Bible. “Note that it says:

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king . . . [Matthew 2:1 NAS]

The ‘Herod’ referred to here was Herod the Great, who died in about 4 BC. Obviously Jesus has to have been born before Herod died.

The birth of Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah

“Let’s look at Matthew’s record of the birth of Jesus.” Professor Ho began reading from the stained and faded pages of his Bible.

1:1 The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham: 2 Abraham was the father of Isaac. . . . 6 Jesse was the father of David the king. David was the father of Solomon. . . . 16 Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah.

18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. 19 And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. 20 But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. 21 "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." 22 Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 23 "BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL," which translated means, "GOD WITH US." 24 And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took *Mary* as his wife, 25 but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus. [Matthew 1:1-2, 6, 16, 18-25 NAS]

Professor Ho looked up from the book. “The birth of Jesus Christ was absolutely unique in history. It fulfilled a series of thousands of years worth of prophecies stretching back all the way to the Garden of Eden. His coming to earth was the culmination of God’s plan for saving people announced in the Old Testament and symbolized in the rituals of Moses’s Law.”

Messianic Prophecies Fulfilled by Jesus's Birth		
<u>Prophetic Requirement</u>	<u>Prediction</u>	<u>Fulfillment</u>
1. Descendent of Eve	Gen. 3:15	John 1:14; etc.
2. Descendent of Abraham	Gen. 22:18	Matt. 1:1, 6; etc.
3. Descendent of David	Isaiah 9:7, 11:1; etc.	Matt. 1:1-2; etc.
4. NOT physical descendent of Jeconiah	Jeremiah 22:28, 30	Luke 3:31
5. Born in Bethlehem	Micah 5:2	Matt. 2:1; Luke 2:1
6. Born of a virgin	Isaiah 7:14	Matt. 1:18-25; Luke 1:31-35
7. Not only a man, but also God	Isaiah 9:6-7; Psalm 110:1-4; Micah 5:2	Luke 1:31-35; John 1:3, 10, 14, 8:58-59, 10:30-33; etc.

Messiah: A human descendent of Eve, conqueror of Satan

“Back when we first started meeting, boys, we discussed the Fall of humanity and God’s curse on the earth. [See Chapter 2.] I don’t know if you recall it, but at the same time that God was pronouncing His fearful judgments of suffering and death, He also made His first promise of redemption.” Professor Ho flipped to the beginning of his Bible and read:

“And I [God] will put enmity between you [Satan] and the

woman [Eve], and between your seed and her seed [Jesus]; he shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.” [Genesis 3:15 NAS]

“There at the darkest hour of our race God gave us a ray of hope: someday a descendent of Eve, a human being, would come and crush Satan. Perhaps Eve and Adam did not understand, but the promise implied not only destroying the devil, but also undoing his work of destruction of God’s creation. The ‘seed’ who would be born would effect a restoration of God’s original ‘very good’ creation, thereby overturning of all that the devil had achieved and completely crushing him. But this would not be achieved without cost; the serpent would ‘bruise him on the heel,’ a serious wound but not destruction. That phrase is the first prediction of Jesus’s death on the cross, where He paid the price for our redemption.

“Thus we see that the Messiah had to be a human being, a descendent of Eve.”

Messiah: Descendent of Abraham, blessing to all nations

“But the prophecies narrow it down much further than that. The Messiah was also to be a descendent of Abraham, a Jew. You probably remember that when God called Abraham, He promised to bless ‘all nations’ through him [Genesis 12:3], and then later specified that the blessing would come through his descendent.” Professor Ho turned a few more pages and read:

18 "In your [Abraham’s] seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My [God’s] voice." [Genesis 22:18 NAS]

“As we discussed before, this amazing promise did not even begin to be fulfilled until after the gospel of Jesus Christ began to be preached. It is indisputable that Christianity’s impact has been worldwide, bringing blessings to all in the form of modern science, the ending of slavery and polygamy, and elevation of the status of women. [See Chapter 4.] More importantly, however, is that through Jesus Christ that people from ‘all the nations of the earth’ can receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life. This fulfills God’s great purpose in establishing the Jewish race.”

Messiah: Descendent of David, eternal king

“You’ll note that Matthew goes out of his way to emphasize that Jesus is not only the descendent of Abraham, but also of King David [Matthew 1:1]. This was specifically predicted in the Old Testament. You will recall we studied some of the predictions of the prophets Jeremiah, who was active c.627-586 BC, and Isaiah, active c.740-680 BC. [See Chapters 7 and 8.] Both of these prophets wrote hundreds of years before Jesus was born and predicted that the Messiah would be King David’s descendent.

“Just before the Babylonian captivity, when it seemed the Davidic dynasty of the kings of Judah was about to be wiped out forever, Jeremiah predicted:

5 "Behold, *the* days are coming," declares the LORD, "When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land. " [Jeremiah 23:5 NAS]

That prophecy was made sometime 600-586 BC, shortly before the Babylonians destroyed the southern kingdom of Judah and killed it’s last king. Jeremiah knew that was going to happen; he adamantly and repeatedly predicted it! But he also insisted that one day a ‘Branch’ or descendent of David would again reign as king. But in the 600 years from the Babylonian captivity to the coming of Jesus, no descendent of David reigned as king. The prophecy was about the future Messiah.

“Isaiah, writing around 732 BC, was more specific about the attributes of this future king.

6 For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. 7 There will be no end to the increase of *His* government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of

hosts will accomplish this. [Isaiah 9:6-7 NAS]

1 Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit. 2 The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. ... 10 Then in that day the nations will resort to the root of Jesse, who will stand as a signal for the peoples; and His resting place will be glorious. [Isaiah 11:1-2, 10 NAS]

Isaiah agrees with Jeremiah that the Messiah will be David's offspring. Isaiah says the Messiah will rule 'on the throne of David,' that is, He will be a king in David's dynastic line. David's father's name was Jesse, so David was considered the 'stem of Jesse'; the Messiah will be a 'shoot' from that 'stem,' that is, He will be a descendent of David."

Xiao Wang voiced a doubt. "There were Davidic kings for another hundred years after Isaiah's time. How can we be sure Isaiah is talking about the Messiah, and not just one of the other kings?"

"A fair question," agreed Professor Ho. "We can know it because of the specific details Isaiah gives about this coming king. He would be called 'Mighty God' [Isaiah 9:6]; he would reign forever, 'from then on and forevermore' [Isaiah 9:7]; and he would have a worldwide scope, 'the nations will resort... a signal for the peoples' [Isaiah 11:10]. This obviously does not refer to any ordinary human king! The Messiah was prophesied to be an immortal Ruler."

Why are there two different genealogies for Jesus?

Xiao Li had a different question. "Professor Ho," he asked, "there's something that's always bothered me. Why is Luke's genealogy of Jesus different from Matthew's?"

"I think we've all asked ourselves that," Professor Ho replied. "The issue is quite complex and there are several possible answers. Let's look at Matthew's list first. Note his careful choice of words when he comes to the end:

16 Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah. [Matthew 1:16 NAS]

In the Greek, the word 'whom' in the phrase 'by whom Jesus was born' is feminine singular, emphatically distinguishing Mary as the only one involved in Jesus's parentage, not Joseph. Clearly there's a break here in the father to son lineage; suddenly Mary stands beside Joseph as an independent unit, not in the chain of descent."

"Then what good is it that Joseph was David's descendent?" asked Xiao Wang.

"Joseph was in the royal line directly descended from the last reigning Davidic king who left offspring, King Jeconiah:

11 [King] Josiah became the father of [King] Jeconiah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon. 12 After the deportation to Babylon [597 BC]: Jeconiah became the father of Shealtiel.... [Matthew 1:11-12 NAS]

As such, Joseph had a legitimate claim to the throne of David."

"But Jesus wasn't Joseph's son," Xiao Li objected.

"True," admitted Professor Ho, "but as an adopted son, Jesus would have gained the right to be a candidate for the throne."^A

"I see," Xiao Li assented. Then after a pause his brow furrowed again. "But what about Luke's genealogy? It seems to say Joseph had a different ancestry."

"Yes, let's come to that now. First of all, note that Luke agrees Joseph was not Jesus's actual father. He notes Mary's miraculous, virgin conception in chapter one. Then, at the beginning of his genealogy, he states:

23 When He began His ministry, Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age, being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph, the son of Eli, ... 31 ...the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan, the son of [King] David, 32 the son of Jesse... [Luke 3:23, 31-32 NAS]

After acknowledging that Joseph wasn't really Jesus's father, Luke traces His genealogy back to David via a non-royal line descended from David's son Nathan. It's different from Matthew's list. What's going on here?" Professor Ho adjusted his glasses and began to count off on his fingers. "Scholars usually suggest one of three possibilities."^{B, 1}

Possibility One: Both genealogies are Joseph's

"First, it is possible that both Matthew and Luke are Joseph's genealogies. Among the Jews, a custom called 'levirate marriage' existed.^C If a married man died without leaving an heir, his unmarried brother was responsible to marry the widow and have children. Their first born son would be legally regarded as the offspring of the deceased man, taking his name and receiving his inheritance. Thus the child of a levirate marriage would have two fathers: an actual, physical one and a legal one. If the brother who married the widow was actually a half-brother, with the same mother but a different father than the dead man, then the lines of the legal and physical ancestries of the levirate son would be

^A Note that Joseph was referred to as Jesus's 'father' in Luke 2:48, indicating Joseph had adopted Jesus and raised him as his own son.

^B For a more thorough discussion of this issue, see Note 1.

^C For examples of levirate marriage, see Genesis 38:6-10, Deuteronomy 25:5-10, Ruth 4:1-10, 14-17. Note how in Ruth 4:14-17 Ob-ed is regarded as the descendent of Naomi, even though he is not her physical descendent.

completely different. If Joseph was the first born son from a levirate marriage contracted by a half-brother, it may be that Matthew records his legal lineage through the deceased man, and Luke records his actual, physical descent through his physical father.”^D

“That seems a little forced,” observed Xiao Wang.

“It’s by no means certain that this was the case with Joseph,” Professor Ho affirmed, “but it’s not as far-fetched as you might think. The levirate custom definitely existed and was even required by Moses’s Law. Furthermore, such situation would tend to arise fairly frequently. Remember that in ancient times, before modern medicine, life expectancy was much lower than now. Many children died young, removing them as potential heirs, and many adult males died before birthing heirs, leaving behind widows who would normally remarry.

Possibility Two: Luke records Mary’s genealogy and Joseph had been ‘adopted’ into Mary’s family

“But there are other possibilities. The second is that Luke is actually recording Mary’s genealogy, with the name of her husband Joseph inserted because he was a sort of ‘adopted son’ of Mary’s father Eli.

“Moses’s Law provided that if a man died having only daughters, they would inherit his estate.^E It’s possible that Mary was the only surviving child of Eli and therefore his heir. Thus Eli’s name and property would pass down to her firstborn male son, Jesus. In that sense, Joseph would have been regarded as married into the line of inheritance of Eli, Mary’s father. Thus for purposes of Jesus’s inheritance, Joseph would have been a sort of ‘adopted son’ of Eli, and so his name would have been inserted in Jesus’s genealogy. This idea, too, is speculative, however.

Possibility Three: Luke records Mary’s genealogy and Joseph is *not* presented as his father

“The third possibility is that Luke does not include Joseph’s name in the genealogy at all. In the Greek, the phrase ‘being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph’ does not have the definite article ‘the’ before ‘Joseph.’ Every name that follows *does* have the definite article, leading some scholars to think we should translate Luke 3:23 as:

‘When He began His ministry, Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age, being the son (as was supposed, of Joseph) of Eli.’ ”

“If that’s correct, why isn’t Mary listed there?” Xiao Wang countered.

“Good question! Those who hold this view note that ancient Jewish society was patrilinear; descent was not normally traced through women. Luke is well known for shifting his style and terminology to fit the cultural background of the peoples and places he is writing about. [See examples in Chapter 10.] On the one hand, dealing with a virgin birth, Luke is more or less forced to trace the matrilineal line. On the other hand, he conforms to the Jewish custom by starting from the first male available to him, Mary’s father. And note that the phrase ‘the son of’ certainly allows for meaning ‘the descendent of’ or ‘the grandson of.’

“To be honest,” Professor Ho admitted, “I’m not much of a Greek scholar and can’t speak to the reasonableness of this third possibility, but some who do know the language well hold to it.”

Xiao Li was confused. “So which one is right?” he asked with a trace of exasperation in his voice.

Professor Ho smiled and shook his head. “I don’t know, Xiao Li. At least for now, we just don’t have enough information to give a definitive answer. But I do know there are several perfectly reasonable possible solutions. Under those circumstances, the only sensible thing is to believe that there is an answer, even if we’re not sure about it yet.”

“Reading the Bible is a little bit like eating fish. If you come to a bone, you don’t throw away the fish; you spit out the bone and go on eating the flesh. Things we don’t fully understand in the Bible are like bones. The fact that some of our questions don’t have answers yet doesn’t mean the Bible is false—the evidence for the truth of the Bible is overwhelming! So the best thing to do is to lay aside the ‘bones’ that we can’t solve yet, and go on ‘eating!’ ” Professor Ho raised his eyebrows and smiled. “And in my experience, a lot of what I once thought were ‘bones’ in the Bible were later completely cleared up!”

Messiah: *Not* the physical descendent of King Jeconiah

“Buried in these complex genealogical questions is a very important fulfillment of prophecy,” Professor Ho continued. “There is no debate that Matthew is giving Joseph’s genealogy. Well, it was actually very important that Jesus *not* be physically in the line of descent listed in Matthew. Although that line descended from King Jeconiah had the most direct claim for rulership, God had already predicted 600 years before Jesus that none of Jeconiah’s offspring would ever rule as king again:

28 "Is this man Coniah [i.e. Jeconiah] a despised, shattered jar? Or is he an undesirable vessel? Why have he and his descendants been hurled out and cast into a land [Babylon] that they had not known? ... 30 "Thus says the LORD, 'Write this man down childless, A man who will not prosper in his days; for no man of his descendants will prosper sitting on the throne of David or ruling again in Judah.'" [Jeremiah 22:28, 30 NAS]

Notice that the text does not say Jeconiah would have no children—he had several—but rather that Jeconiah would be

^D Some scholars who hold to the levirate marriage explanation think Matthew records the actual physical descent and Luke the legal descent.

^E For a possible example of a father’s name being preserved for inheritance purposes through his daughter, see Numbers 27:1-11. Note especially the phrase ‘the name of our father’ in verse 4.

regarded as if he had had no children for purposes of kingship. None of his direct descendents would ever reign. Thus if Jesus had been Jeconiah's physical descendent, He could not have been Messiah the King."

"I never noticed that before!" Xiao Li exclaimed.

"Neither did I," admitted Professor Ho, "until I saw it pointed out in a study Bible. These genealogical issues are complex, but taken together they help to prove that Jesus really was the Messiah. He had to fulfill a large number of interlocking conditions before He could legitimately claim David's throne. He had to literally be a physical descendent of David, but it couldn't be through Jeconiah. So God arranged it would be through David's son Nathan instead. At the same time, if Jesus had had no claim on Jeconiah's line, others might be able to claim they were more legitimate contenders for the throne. So God arranged for Him to have an claim on Jeconiah's line by adoption."

Gaps in Matthew's genealogy

Xiao Wang was now looking carefully at the details. "Why are there so many fewer generations from David to Jesus in Matthew compared to Luke?"

"A good question, with an easy answer," Professor Ho replied promptly. "Matthew purposely skips over generations in at least the second and third sections of his genealogy to made it conform to a three section pattern with 14 generations in each section. He's not trying to trick anyone; he even omits the names of four of the kings of Judah, names which were known to every Jew and to anyone who's familiar with the Old Testament. His genealogy is accurate and in chronological order, but he is not attempting to list every name. In that, he follows the accepted conventions of a Jew writing a genealogy in the first century AD." [For a more extensive discussion, see Chapter 3, Appendix 3-1.]

Messiah: Born in Bethlehem

"Now let's look at where Jesus was born. Joseph and Mary were living in Nazareth right after they got married, but that wasn't where Jesus was born. For the background, lets turn back to the gospel of Luke:

1 Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth.
2 This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city. 4 Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, 5 in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. 6 While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. 7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. [Luke 2:1-7 NAS]

As we discussed last week, the dating for the 'first census' under Quirinius is still unknown. [See Chapter 10, But isn't the New Testament wrong sometimes?] The census may have been taken for tax purposes; the Romans did these periodically in provinces and regions throughout their empire. Or it may have been a special registration at which an oath of loyalty to Augustus Caesar was to be taken.² What's fascinating is, it certainly wasn't ordered by Augustus to get the Messiah born in Bethlehem! Here again, as we've seen so often before, God used the free will choice of a human being to achieve His own ends."

Professor Ho paused a moment, staring down at his desk and musing. "Think what it looked like from the human perspective," he began slowly. "There was Augustus Caesar in Rome, ruling over an empire so vast that only our Han dynasty at the other end of the world had an equivalent population. There he was in his palace, deciding for his own reasons of state to demand that everyone in his empire register in their hometowns. He almost certainly knew nothing about the predictions about the Messiah. Certainly it wasn't on his mind that the long awaited Savior was finally going to be born. And yet God used him, idolater that he was, to make sure the Messiah was born in the right place. His order travelled across land and sea and arrived at just the right time to force Joseph to undertake a long, difficult journey while his virgin wife was pregnant, thus ensuring that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem."

"Why did that matter?" Xiao Wang asked.

"Because God had predicted long before that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. And every Jew knew it.

"Let's look again at what Matthew says. When the magi came to Jerusalem to worship Jesus, they asked King Herod where this new king was:

1 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, 2 "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him." 3 When Herod the king heard *this*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. 4 Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. 5 They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet: 6 'AND YOU, BETHLEHEM, LAND OF JUDAH, ARE BY NO MEANS LEAST AMONG THE LEADERS OF JUDAH; FOR OUT OF YOU SHALL COME FORTH A RULER WHO WILL SHEPHERD MY PEOPLE ISRAEL.'"

...

9 ...[the magi] they went their way; and the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them until it came and stood over *the place* where the Child was. 10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. 11 After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and worshiped Him. [Matthew 2:1-6, 9-11 NAS]

The term 'magi' as used here refers to a class of wise men specializing in astrology, medicine, and natural science. They

were foreigners, non-Jews, from somewhere east of Palestine, very possibly from Mesopotamia or Persia.”

“Why would they be looking for the King of the Jews?” Xiao Wang wondered.

“Yes, how would they know about Him?” agreed Professor Ho. “You remember that in 605-586 BC many Jews were deported to Babylonia. [See Chapter 8.] They established communities there, and thousands of Jews continued to live in Mesopotamia and Persia after the Babylonian captivity—in fact, a few of their descendents are still in Iraq and Iran today. Apparently the magi had access to the Old Testament through such Jews, and thus they knew a special king, Messiah, would be born to the Jews. If they had the book of Isaiah, they could have known that He would be the Savior and the King of gentiles as well. You remember we discussed this before.” [See Chapter 7.] Professor Ho flipped to the middle of his Bible and read:

“ 1 "Behold, My Servant [Messiah, Jesus Christ], whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations. ... 4 "He will not be disheartened or crushed until He has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands will wait expectantly for His law." ... 6 "I am the LORD, I have called you [Messiah, Jesus Christ] in righteousness, I will also hold you by the hand and watch over you, and I will appoint you as a covenant to the people, as a light to the nations, [Isaiah 42:1, 4, 6 NAS]

6 ... "It is too small a thing that You [Messiah, Jesus Christ] should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations so that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth." [Isaiah 49:6 NAS]

With promises like that available to them, we can understand why the magi would have come looking for Messiah, the king of the Jews.”

“What was the star?” Xiao Wang asked. “Was it a natural phenomenon God used, or a miracle?”

“Many have wondered that,” Professor replied. “There were a number of impressive astronomical phenomena visible to the magi during the range of time when Jesus would have been born. Our ancient Chinese astronomical records include comets or nova observed in the period 6-4 BC, during the reign of the Former Han emperor Ai Di [汉哀帝]. These would have been visible in the Middle East as well. For one example, Ban Gu [班固] and Ban Zhao [班昭] in the *History of the Former Han* [前汉书] and Ma Duanlin [马端临] in the *Comprehensive Examination of Literature* [文献通考] mention a comet in about 5 BC that was visible for 70 days or longer, enough time for the magi to travel from Persia to Jerusalem. There were also some notable conjunctions of planets during the period 7-2 BC which could have served as direction to the magi.”³

“But it says later on that the star stopped in the sky right over where Jesus was,” objected Xiao Li.

“True,” admitted Professor Ho, “but at certain times planets will appear to an observer on earth to have stopped moving and be standing still in the sky. Our problem in all these conjectures is, we are not certain exactly what year Jesus was born in, so we cannot be sure which celestial phenomenon were happening then.”

“Well I think it was just a miracle,” Xiao Li persisted.

“You might be right,” Professor Ho acknowledged. “It is entirely possible that the star was a miraculous or visionary phenomenon. And it’s also possible that God gave the magi a prophetic revelation of it’s significance. The Bible’s history doesn’t give us enough detail to be certain about these things. But what we are certain about is the magi knew a special king, the One predicted in the Old Testament, had been born, and they went to Israel to find Him and worship Him. Naturally enough, they went to the capital of Jerusalem to find the newborn king. It was quite clear to all the Jews that they meant the Messiah who would rule the world. So Herod inquired of the experts in Jerusalem about where the Messiah would be born, and they readily answered him, correctly quoting the relevant prophecy from the book of Micah:

2 But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, *too* little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me [the LORD] to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity. [Micah 5:2 NAS]

Seven hundred years before Jesus was born, Micah predicted that the Messiah had to be born in Bethlehem!”

Xiao Wang was uncertain. “Wasn’t King David born in Bethlehem? How do you know Micah wasn’t just talking about him?”

“For two reasons,” Professor Ho replied. “First, Micah lived over 200 years after David’s died—a little late to be predicting his birth, I think you would agree! Second, the ruler Micah predicts is said to have been around ‘from the days of eternity.’ He wasn’t going to be an ordinary human being. And because He wasn’t an ordinary human, He didn’t have an ordinary birth.”

Messiah: Born of a virgin

“Both Matthew and Luke emphatically state that Jesus’s conception was miraculous. You will recall that just before she became pregnant, an angel appeared to Mary and told her what was about to happen:

30 The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. 31 "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. 32 "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; 33 and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end." 34 Mary said to the angel,

"How can this be, since I am a virgin?" 35 The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God. [Luke 1:30-35 NAS]

Let's not be foolish here and think that Luke, who was a doctor, and Matthew were ignorant and superstitious; people in the first century knew where babies came from! Even Mary herself found it hard to believe before it happened; she asks the angel, 'how can this be, since I am a virgin?' Furthermore, the betrothal period was normally about a year—long enough to ensure the woman was not already pregnant when the betrothal was contracted. When Joseph discovered Mary's situation, he naturally thought she had committed sexual immorality. It took a visitation from an angel to convince him that a miracle had occurred.

"Before Jesus's birth, Mary remained a virgin; there was no uniting of a human sperm with an ovum in her womb. Nonetheless, she became pregnant and a child developed in her womb."

"Was Jesus like—a clone of Mary?" Xiao Li wondered.

"No," Professor Ho shook his head emphatically, "it was nothing like human cloning technology. As you no doubt remember from biology, it is the male's sperm which can be an X or a Y and determines the gender of a baby. All cells in a woman's body, including the ova, have only 'Y' chromosomes. If Jesus had been cloned from Mary, He would have been a woman."

Professor Ho shook his head again. "No, this event was entirely supernatural. Even before I was a Christian, I was amazed to find that many nominal Christians in the West don't believe in the virgin birth, even some church leaders. What God do they believe in? Since God is the Creator of the so-called 'natural' laws, they are under His control. He is not limited by them the way you and I are. He transcends nature and can do whatever He wishes in the world of matter and energy. So it should not seem strange that He used a supernatural means to enter the world.

"The virgin birth of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, was also predicted in the Old Testament. As we saw a moment ago, Matthew refers to the prophecy:

22 Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 23 "BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL," which translated means, "GOD WITH US." [Matthew 1:22-23 NAS]

Matthew is quoting from Isaiah. Over 700 years before the event, in about 732 BC, the prophet had predicted:^F

Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel. [Isaiah 7:14 NAS]

The miraculous birth helps to show that it was no ordinary person coming into the world. Who was Jesus? Both the Old Testament predictions and the New Testament fulfillments show that He was not just an ordinary human being. He was 'Immanuel,' 'God with us.' In other words, He was God Himself come to earth as a human being."

Messiah: God Himself become a human being

"The final prophecy which Jesus had to fulfill in order to be the Messiah wasn't just about His ancestry or birthplace, nor even a miraculous conception. To really be the promised Messiah of the Old Testament, Jesus had to be God Himself come to earth as a human being.

"In the same section of Isaiah which predicts the Messiah's virgin birth, God also described some of His attributes and actions:

6 For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. 7 There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this. [Isaiah 9:6-7 NAS]

Note the four things the son is called in verse six. These are not like normal personal names found in the Old Testament.⁴ They were actually titles, throne names. 'Wonderful Counselor' and 'Prince of Peace' might possibly be applied to a human king. But 'Mighty God' and 'Eternal Father' can only be referring to Yahweh, the one true God. Remember that Isaiah was a pious Jew and would have considered it blasphemy to apply divine attributes to any human being. In addition, His reign is predicted to last 'forevermore,' another attribute that could not be true of an ordinary human.

"Remember, this is the same prophet Isaiah who correctly predicted the end of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, the Babylonian captivity and restoration of the Southern Kingdom of Judah, the permanent desolation of Babylon, and the worldwide spread of Christianity, the religion of the Jewish Messiah. [See chapters 7 and 8.] It's clear that Isaiah was inspired by the Holy Spirit in his prophecies.

^F For a discussion of the meaning of the Hebrew word in Isaiah 7:14 translated 'virgin,' see: Harrison, R.K. Introduction to the Old Testament, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969, Pg. 482. The prophecy in Isaiah had a short term fulfillment in which an unmarried young woman who was a virgin subsequently got married, conceived, and birthed a child around 731 BC, and a long term fulfillment in the miraculous virgin conception and birth of Jesus Christ over 700 years later.

“It’s not only Isaiah in the Old Testament who predicted the Messiah’s deity. King David was also inspired by God to say this about him:

1 {A Psalm of David.} The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet." 2 The LORD will stretch forth Your strong scepter from Zion, *saying*, "Rule in the midst of Your enemies." ... 4 The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind, "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." [Psalm 110:1-2, 4 NAS]

The passage was universally recognized as a prediction about the Messiah by the Jews. David addresses One who will be established to rule as king in Zion, that is, Jerusalem. As such, the ruler would have to be one of his own offspring.^G But in that case, how could David call him ‘my Lord?’ Calling his own offspring ‘Lord’ violated the absolute rules of respect for parents and ancestors. Furthermore, He is said to be a ‘priest.’ David was not a priest and did not belong to the priestly tribe of Levi, so his descendants could not be priests. A later attempt by one of the kings in David’s line to intrude into priestly activities was severely judged by God. [See King Uzziah in 2 Chronicles 26:16-21.] Finally, David’s ‘Lord’ is predicted to be a priest ‘forever.’ Human priests don’t continue to serve forever. The solution to the conundrum is that David’s offspring, Jesus the Messiah, was also God. Therefore David could legitimately call Him ‘Lord,’ and therefore He could both be a priest who mediated between God and humans, and be one forever.

“Finally, the prediction about where the Messiah would be born, the one the chief priests quoted to Herod and the magi, also contained a prediction of His deity. We looked at it a moment ago in the prophet Micah:

2 But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, *too* little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me [the LORD] to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity. [Micah 5:2 NAS]

Note that Micah, writing in about 700 BC, is predicting the coming of the Messiah at a point in the future. He will be a real human being from Bethlehem. At the same time, He is said to have existed ‘long ago, from the days of eternity.’ Only God Himself has existed from eternity past.

“The same truth is taught clearly and repeatedly in the New Testament. In the section of Luke we looked at a few minutes ago, the angel announces to Mary:

31 "...you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; 33 and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end. ... 35 ...The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God. " [Luke 1:31-33, 35 NAS]

The angel predicts that Mary’s miraculous offspring, Jesus the Messiah, will be ‘the Son of the Most High’ and ‘the Son of God,’ and that He will reign ‘forever.’ ”

“But ‘Son of God’ isn’t the same thing as ‘God,’ ” objected Xiao Wang.

“Yes, but you must remember that these were Jews. They lived in a time when almost everyone around them was worshipping idols and telling myths about heroes who were regarded to have been sons of various gods, half human and half divine. The Jews knew there was only One God, and that He did not cohabit with human females! Furthermore, a son and a father are of the same species. I have sons; because I am a human being, my children are also human beings. One who is the Son of God must be of the same ‘species,’ as it were, as God is, must have the same essence. But God is alone and unique, so a claim to be of the same essence as God really amounts to a claim to being God.

“But if you think that’s ambiguous, consider these scriptures.” Professor Ho turned forward a few pages in his Bible. “Jesus Himself as an adult directly claimed to be God. In the Fall of about 29 AD, at the end of a lengthy, public discussion with a crowd in the temple at Jerusalem, Jesus made an amazing claim:

58 Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am." 59 Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple. [John 8:58-59 NAS]

Here Jesus both asserted that He existed before Abraham was born, and dared to refer to Himself by the sacred name of Yahweh, ‘I am.’ [See Chapter 5.] The Jews listening to Him understood it perfectly and were about to stone Him to death for blasphemy, as the Law of Moses required. As if that weren’t enough, a few months later, in December of c.29 AD, Jesus publically repeated His claim again right there in the temple at Jerusalem:

30 "I and the Father are one." 31 The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him. 32 Jesus answered them, "I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?" 33 The Jews answered Him, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out *to be* God." [John 10:30-33 NAS]

There can be no question that Jesus Himself claimed to be God.

“Finally, the apostles who heard Jesus’s teaching and observed His miracles and His resurrection testified to His deity. At the beginning of his gospel, the apostle John, inspired by the Holy Spirit, writes:

^G See 2 Samuel 9:9, 12-16 and Jeremiah 33:17, 20-21.

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. ... 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. ... 14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. [John 1:1-3, 10, 14 NAS]

The term ‘Word’ here refers to Jesus. The ‘Word’ is God, already existed at the beginning of the universe, and created everything. In fact, verses one to three here are a deliberate echo of the very first verse in the Bible:

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. [Genesis 1:1 NAS]

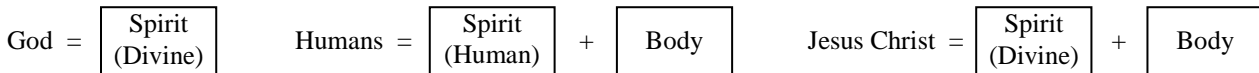
John wants us to understand that our Creator, Yahweh, the God of the Old Testament, became a human being at a specific point in history: ‘the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.’”

A puzzled expression had been etched deeper and deeper into Xiao Wang’s face as he listened to Professor Ho explain Jesus’s deity. Finally he burst out, “But that seems to contradict everything else the Bible says. God doesn’t have a body, and He can’t be just a human being.”

Professor Ho nodded. “I felt the same way the first time I heard it. The key point in understanding this event is the little word ‘just’ which you just said: God can’t be *just* a human being. The ‘Word,’ God the Son, didn’t become incarnate by giving up His deity and becoming ‘just a man.’ He did it by *adding* a human nature to the divine nature He already had.”

The Incarnation: Fully God and fully human

Professor Ho rose and went to his filing cabinet, pulled out a folder and opened it on the desktop. “To help us understand this, we need to consider the nature of God and the nature of humans. Perhaps this diagram will be helpful.”



Professor Ho pointed toward the left of the diagram. “First, consider God’s nature. God existed before there was matter, energy, space, or time; He is completely independent of those. He is a pure Spirit, as Jesus Himself noted:

24 God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. [John 4:24 NAS]

In addition to being a pure Spirit, God also had no beginning. He is the only uncreated being; He Himself is the Creator of all that has been created.

“Human beings are a combination of a material body and a spiritual soul. We are both like and unlike God. We were made in God’s image; that is, we have a self-conscious spirit with free will and moral discernment. However, unlike God, we also have a material component, a physical body.^H That’s what I take as a working definition of a human being: a body plus a spirit.

“This helps me to understand the incarnation. When God became a human being, all He did was *add* a human body to His existence. At the moment of Jesus’s conception, God’s divine, uncreated Spirit began to live in a physical body, just the way you and I have been since we were conceived. Because He then had both a body and a spirit, He fulfills the definition of what it means to be a human being. At the same time, because His spirit is the eternal, uncreated Spirit of God, He fulfills the definition of being God, who is the only eternally self-existent spirit. Thus Jesus is, as the theologians say, ‘fully God and fully man.’”

Xiao Wang was thinking deeply. “I can see what you mean by Jesus meeting the definitions of both God and man. But several things are confusing to me. For one, while Jesus was on earth, how could God still be in heaven?”

“Many of us have a misconception about heaven,” Professor Ho explained. “Heaven is not a physical location. It’s not ‘up there’ or ‘somewhere out beyond the stars’ or ‘beyond the edge of the universe.’ Heaven is a spiritual state, the state of being with God, your spirit together with His spirit in direct intercourse. In other words, heaven is defined by the presence of God’s spirit, by having access to Him.

“At the same time, God Himself is omnipresent. God constantly has access to the universe at every point; nothing and no place is out of His reach.”

“But I have another question,” Xiao Wang replied. “If Jesus was God, why did He pray to God? And why did He call God ‘My Father,’ as though God were someone else, not Himself?”

Professor Ho unconsciously furrowed his brows. “Your question touches on one of the deepest mysteries in the Bible: the Trinity.”

The Trinity: One God eternally existing in three Persons

“A moment ago, we looked at the apostle John’s assertion of Jesus’s deity:

^H Note that most of the time the Bible does not attempt to distinguish between ‘soul’ and ‘spirit.’ See the discussion in Chapter 2 Appendix 2-1: The use of the words “soul” and “spirit” in the Bible.

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. [John 1:1-3 NAS]

Notice how unusual the description of the ‘Word,’ Jesus Christ, is. On the one hand, this ‘Word’ was ‘with God,’ clearly indicating that there is a distinction between God and the Word. On the other hand, John flatly states that ‘the Word was God.’ How can both be true? We wouldn’t say, ‘In the morning the student was there, and the student was with Xiao Wang, and the student *was* Xiao Wang.’ If the student was Xiao Wang, then there’s only one person there, and nobody else is ‘with’ him!”

“Now I’m more puzzled,” complained Xiao Wang. “What does John mean?”

“Obviously he wasn’t trying to confuse us,” Professor Ho replied. “John, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, was expressing with careful accuracy the real nature of God. I can summarize the teaching of the Bible on this topic by saying there is one God who eternally exists in three Persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. In John 1:1-3, ‘the Word’ here refers to God the Son, Jesus. He has always existed as One of the three Persons in the Trinity. Thus He has always been ‘with God’ the Father and, at the same time, always ‘was God.’”

Xiao Wang felt even more confused. “So there are three Gods?”

Professor Ho shook his head emphatically. “No, there is only one God.”

“So He has three parts?”

“No. God the Father is all that God is. If you have God the Father, you have all of God. The same is true for God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.”

“So it’s just three different names?”

“No. The three are separate Persons.”

Xiao Wang began to be exasperated. “But that doesn’t make any sense. If they’re different ‘Persons,’ as you put it, then if you have one you don’t necessarily have the other two. They have to be separate.”

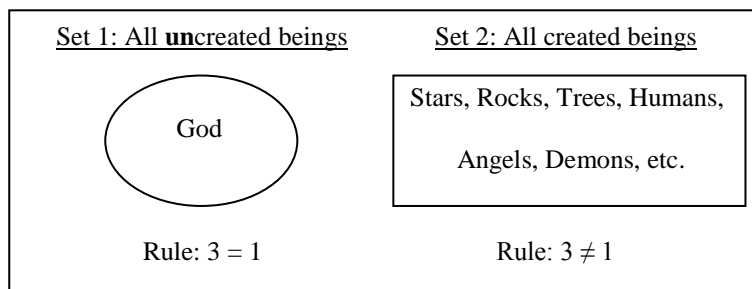
Professor Ho looked at him sympathetically. “I can certainly understand your confusion! I’ve shared it in the past. In simple terms, the only way to understand the Bible’s teaching about God’s nature is to say that God is three *and* God is one at the same time. For God, $3 = 1$.”

Xiao Wang’s face was wrinkled in bewilderment. “Professor Ho, you’ve always been so logical with me. I’ve appreciated that about you. But now you suddenly seem to be abandoning logic.”

Professor Ho smiled at him. “I was troubled about that myself for a long time regarding this issue. Then eventually I realized that by applying a little set theory to the problem, I had a way of understanding it that seems to make sense.”

“What do you mean?”

“First, let’s establish our sets. The group of all uncreated beings is one; the group of all created beings is the other. The only member of the group of uncreated beings is, of course, God. Absolutely everything else goes in the created beings group. The two sets are completely separate and mutually exclusive. It turns out that different rules apply to the two sets. For the set ‘created beings’ there’s a rule ‘ $3 \neq 1$.’ But for the set ‘uncreated beings,’ there’s a different rule: ‘ $3 = 1$.’



“But that means the rules of arithmetic don’t apply to God!”

“Where did those rules come from?”

“I don’t know. From God Himself, I guess. He made everything.”

“If that’s the case, why would we expect the rules to necessarily apply to Himself?”

Think of a human creator, say, an author writing a novel. Let’s say he sets it during World War II. In his story, none of the Chinese characters

can understand the Japanese language, so one of the problems they face in their resistance struggle is they can never understand what the occupation troops are saying to each other. That’s the situation the writer sets up for his characters. It’s an iron rule which is never broken in the book. Would that mean that the writer himself could not possibly understand a single word of Japanese?”

Xiao Wang thought of his own painful experiences with Japanese as a second foreign language. “No, of course not. He might be able to understand some.”

“That’s how it is with God. The rules that He set up for His creation don’t necessarily apply to Him. For an obvious example, the law of conservation of matter and energy which He set up for the universe doesn’t apply to Him—otherwise He couldn’t be the Creator! So you see, it makes sense to me that God might have made another rule for His creation that does not apply to Himself, namely ‘ $3 \neq 1$.’

Xiao Wang thought for a moment. “I see you point,” he said at last, “but it still seems a bit forced to me.”

“I can understand that,” replied Professor Ho, “and I’m not claiming my ‘two sets’ solution is a Christian dogma. It helps me to understand it, though. Overall, the Trinity is definitely a mystery. I never would have come up with such a counterintuitive idea—and I’m sure John, Matthew, and Paul wouldn’t have, either! I only believe it because God has revealed it to us. I trust His self-description; how else could I know what He’s like?”

Professor Ho once again rose and retrieved a folder from his files. Opening it, he handed a sheet to each of the boys

as he explained, “We don’t have time to go into all of it today, but here’s an outline of some of the relevant scriptures which you can look up for yourselves. [See Appendix 11-1.] God Himself has revealed to us that He is Triune; there’s no other way to integrate all the statements He makes about His nature in the Bible.”

Why was it necessary for God to become a human being?

“Xiao Wang, I know a lot of this might seem very abstract. But it really does matter. The Trinity matters a lot,¹ though that might not be obvious to you right now. But I think you’ll be able to understand the importance of the Incarnation, why God had to become a human being.”

“So Jesus could die for us!” interjected Xiao Li.

“Yes Xiao Li,” Professor Ho affirmed, “so Jesus could die for us. There was no ordinary human being who could have died to take the punishment for our sins. All of us have sins of our own to be punished for; we couldn’t take anyone else’s place! So God Himself became a human in order to die for humanity, for a pack of rebels who had disobeyed Him by constantly violating their own consciences. As a result, we can be forgiven and restored to peaceful fellowship with God.

“In addition to this, by becoming a human being, God the Son was able to sympathize with our human limitations and sufferings, not just through His omniscience as God, but also through His own experience as a man. Think of what the Incarnation means: the glorious God humbled Himself and became an infant unable to speak! From this I know for sure that my Creator loves me, pities me, understands me. It reminds me of something else God said to us through the prophet Isaiah.” Professor Ho flipped back to the Old Testament section of his Bible and read:

15 For thus says the high and exalted One Who lives forever, whose name is Holy, "I dwell *on* a high and holy place, and *also* with the contrite and lowly of spirit in order to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite. . . . 18 "I have seen his ways, but I will heal him; I will lead him and restore comfort to him and to his mourners, 19 creating the praise of the lips. Peace, peace to him who is far and to him who is near," Says the LORD, "and I will heal him." [Isaiah 57:15, 18-19 NAS]

Professor Ho looked up from the book with a solemn expression on his face. “That’s the invitation that the true God gives to all of us. He has ‘seen our ways,’ all our sins, but He is still willing to heal us. It was to heal us and give us peace that He came as a human baby to Bethlehem.”

Appendix 11-1: The doctrine of the Trinity in the Bible.

What is commonly called the doctrine of the Trinity is a cover term encompassing seven specific teachings found repeatedly in the Bible. Since the Bible is inspired by omniscient God, it has no contradictions; all seven of these teachings are simultaneously true. The verses listed below should be looked up and considered in their context.

General References: Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14

1. The Father is God

- Direct statement: John 6:27; 1 Cor. 8:6; Eph. 4:6; James 1:27
- Creator: Genesis 1:1
- Eternally existing: 1 Tim. 1:17
- Accepts worship: John 4:21-23
- Inspires scripture / prophecy: 2 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 1:1
- Judge: Rom. 2:6
- Forgives sin: Matt. 6:14-15
- Raises the dead: Rom. 4:17

2. The Son is God

- Direct statement of equality with the Father: John 5:18, 10:30, 12:45, 14:7-9, 16:15, 17:21
- Direct statement: John 1:1, 1:18 (not *textus receptus*); Heb. 1:8; Col. 2:9; Isaiah 9:6
- Creator: John 1:3; Heb. 1:2; Col. 1:16
- Eternally existing: Micah 5:2; John 1:2, 8:58, 17:5; Col. 1:17
- Accepts worship: John 20:28; Rev. 4:11--5:14
- Inspires scripture / prophecy: Rev. 19:10

¹ For one example, the Trinity is necessary for God to be love. 1 John 4:8 says that “God is love.” 1 Corinthians 13:5 says “[love] does not seek it’s own;” instead, love seeks the good of others. A good definition of love, then, is ‘seeking the good of another.’ If God were not Triune, He could not have loved anything until He created others. This would mean both that God in His eternal essence would not have really been loving, since there was no ‘other’ whose good He could seek, and that God would have been dependent on His creation in order to fulfill His goals, that He was constrained and needed to create us. But God is Triune, and in eternity past the members of the Trinity loved one another before anything else existed.

- Judge: John 5:22 Rev. 22:12
- Forgives sin: Mark 2:5-10
- Raises the dead: John 6:40

3. The Holy Spirit is God

- Direct statement of equality with God the Father: 2 Cor. 3:17-18
- Indirect statement: Acts 5:3-4; 1 Cor. 12:3
- Creator: Genesis 1:2
- Eternally existing: Heb. 9:14
- Inspires scripture / prophecy: 2 Pet. 1:21; Acts 28:25
- Raises the dead: Rom. 8:11

[For sections 4 to 6 below, see especially John chapters 14 to 17]

4. The Father is not the Son

- A father is not the same as a son, nor are they so-called “different manifestations” of the same entity: Matt. 1:1; Mark 1:1 (and numerous other references)
- Father refers to the Son as different entity: Mark 9:7-8; 2Pe 1:16-18
- Son prays to the Father John 17:1 (and numerous other references)
- Son sends the disciples (who are distinct from Himself) as He Himself had been sent by the Father: John 17:18, 20:21
- The Son goes to the Father, a distinct entity in a separate place: John 16:10
- A vine is not its vinedresser: John 15:1
- The Son has always existed distinct from (yet one with) the Father: Genesis 1:1; Heb. 1:2; John 1:1, 17:5
- The Father and Son love one another, love between two entities: John 14:31, 15:9
- The Son exists at the right hand of the Father and receives promises from Him: Acts 2:33
- The Son does not know everything that the Father does: Matt. 24:36

5. The Father is not the Holy Spirit

- Jesus said the Father would “send” the Holy Spirit: John 14:26 (one does not send oneself; “send” is Strong’s #3992; compare the same root as used in Matt. 2:8; John 1:22, 33; and numerous other references)
- The Holy Spirit “proceeds from” the Father: John 15:26 (“proceeds from,” Strong’s #1607, cannot mean “is a manifestation of.” Compare the following verses which also use #1607: Matt. 15:18, 17:21, 20:29; Mark 13:1; Luke 4:37; John 5:29; Eph. 4:29; Rev. 1:16, 4:5, 9:17, 22:1)
- There are many more Biblical examples showing that the Father is not the Holy Spirit, but number 4 above is key and has enough already

6. The Son is not the Holy Spirit

- The Holy Spirit comes upon the Son: John 1:32-33
- The Holy Spirit will be sent in the name of the Son (to be sent in the someone else’s name means you represent another entity): John 14:26
- The Son being present with the disciples is not the same thing as the Holy Spirit being with them. The Holy Spirit is with the Father and will come forth from the Father: John 15:26
- The Son will send the Holy Spirit later, who cannot come while the Son is on earth: John 16:7 Acts 1:5, 8
- There are many more Biblical examples showing that the Son is not the Holy Spirit, but number 4 above is key and has enough already

7. There is only one God

- Deut 4:35, 4:39, 6:4; Mark 12:29, 32; 1 Tim. 2:5; James 2:19 (and numerous other references)

¹ For a discussion, see: Loucks, Jim, “The Genealogies in Matthew and Luke.” answering-islam.org/BibleCom/mt1-1.html

² For a discussion, see: Finegan, Jack. Handbook of Biblical Chronology, Revised Edition, Hendrickson Publishers, 1998, pg.302-306 (§519-526).

³ Note 2, pg.306-320 (§527-551).

⁴ Barker, Kenneth L., General Editor. The NIV Study Bible, 10th Anniversary Edition. Zondervan Publishing House, 1995. Commentary at Isaiah 9:6.