

Lesson 34: Life of Christ

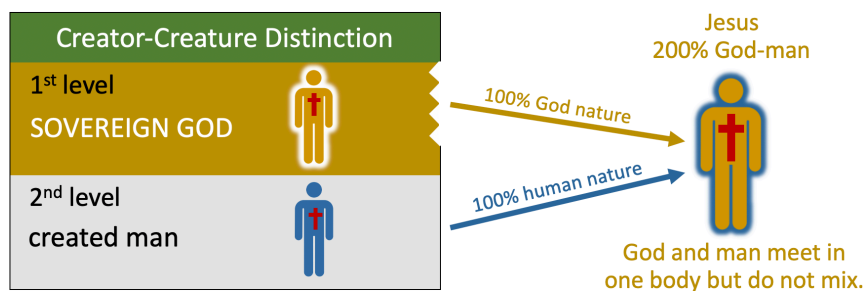
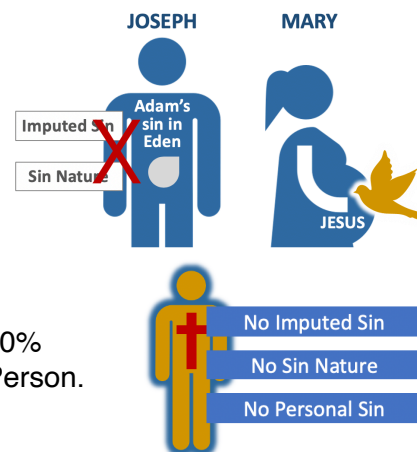
Previously...

When the time was right, the Holy Spirit came upon the virgin Mary and she gave birth to Jesus. This is God Himself!

Jesus is totally sinless.

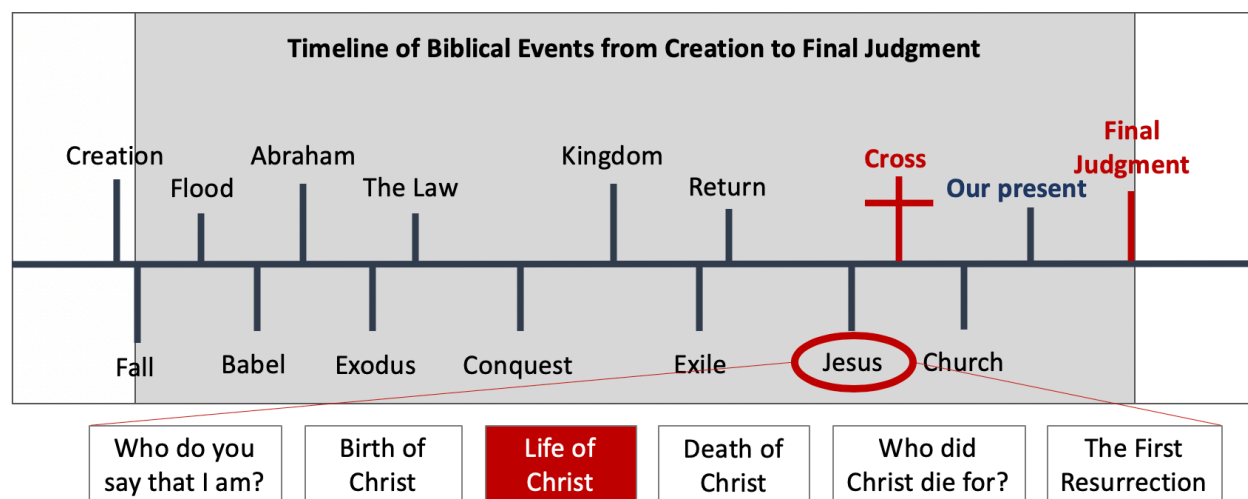
- Because He didn't have a human father, He didn't get Adam's sin or sin nature.
- And He lived a totally sinless life.

So Jesus is totally righteous. There is no one like Him: He is 100% God and 100% human at the same time. He is the only 200% Person.



Yahweh in the Old Testament is exactly the same God as in the New Testament.

- In the Old Testament, God revealed Himself to the prophets and to the people in different ways.
- At the start of the New Testament, God shows Himself to everyone as Jesus.



Before we study Jesus' life on earth, it is important that we understand a little more about God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

God is One and God is Also Three—the Mystery of the Trinity

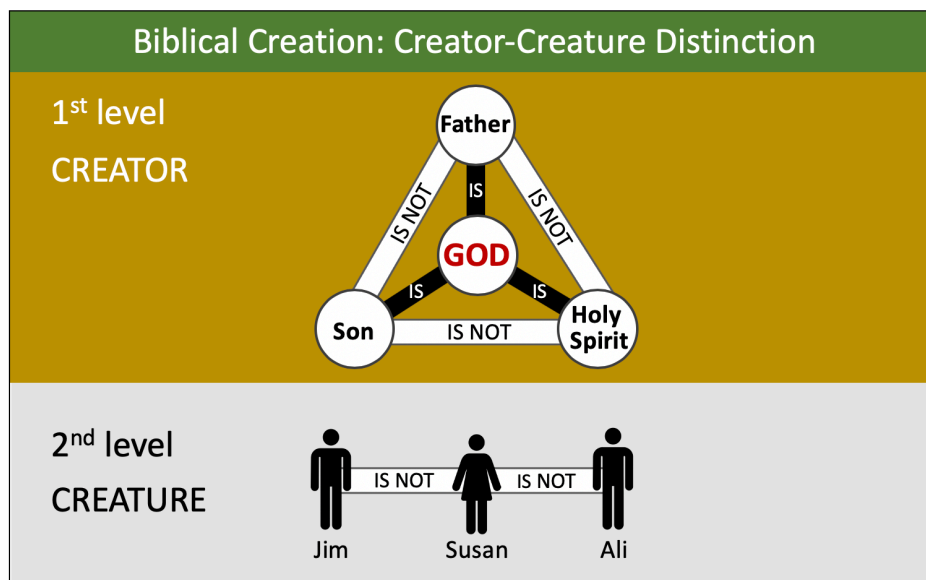
In the Bible, we see that there is only one Creator-God, Yahweh. However, the Bible also talks about Creator-God Yahweh being three (and only three) separate Persons:

1. God the Father,
2. God the Son and
3. God the Holy Spirit.

There are three “Persons”, but they are all the same God.

So, believers started using the word “Trinity” to talk about this special feature of God: how God is one, but God is also three.

Why “Trinity”? The word “trinity” comes from the number “three”.



Even though the Bible never uses the word “Trinity”, believers use this word because the Bible does teach that there are three Persons of the same one God.

The Trinity is not easy to understand or explain. This is because no one and nothing on earth is like that. God is very unique in that way.

And He did not create anything in the world to be one but also three persons at the same time.

Where in the Bible do we find these Persons of God?



A. God the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

God the Holy Spirit is clearly present in the Old Testament. This is what the prophet Isaiah recorded of God speaking:

Isaiah 48:12, 16

¹² “Listen to me, O family of Jacob,
Israel my chosen one!




I alone am God,
the First and the Last.

¹⁶ Come closer, and listen to this.

From the beginning I have told you plainly what would happen.”

And now the Sovereign LORD and his Spirit
have sent me with this message.

Isaiah mentions the three Persons of God in this passage:

-  Sovereign LORD (Yahweh): **God the Father**
-  His Spirit: **God the Holy Spirit**
-  The Speaker: **God the Son**

We see this again in another passage. Here in Isaiah 60, Yahweh is speaking. He says:




Isaiah 60:22–61:1

²² The smallest family will become a thousand people,
and the tiniest group will become a mighty nation.
At the right time, I, the LORD, will make it happen.”

¹ The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is upon me,
for the LORD has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted
and to proclaim that captives will be released
and prisoners will be freed.

Again, there are three Persons of God in this passage.

-  Sovereign LORD (Yahweh): **God the Father**
-  Yahweh’s Spirit: **God the Holy Spirit**
-  The Speaker: **God the Son** (Note how the Son also calls Himself “Yahweh”: “I, the LORD”)

In fact, God the Holy Spirit is mentioned right at the start of the Bible at creation!

Genesis 1:1–2

¹ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.



B. God the Son in the Old Testament

Some people think that the first time we read about Jesus is when He comes as a baby in the New Testament. But this is not true.

“God the Son” also very clearly appears in the Old Testament. In fact, the Old Testament specifically uses the word “Son” to refer to Him.

Proverbs 30:4

Who but God goes up to heaven and comes back down?

Who holds the wind in his fists?

Who wraps up the oceans in his cloak?

Who has created the whole wide world?

What is his name—and his son’s name?

Tell me if you know!

Who is this verse talking about? It’s about Yahweh and His Son!

What is His name?

What is His Son’s name?

YAHWEH

?

In the Old Testament, God didn’t reveal the Son’s name, but we now know that this Son is Jesus. Jesus is the Son of God!

Jesus did many things in the past. However, the Old Testament didn’t use the name “Jesus”. Instead, the Bible used these names:

| God the Son in the Old Testament | |
|----------------------------------|----------|
| i | ii |
| Angel of the LORD | The Word |



I. Jesus: The Angel of the LORD

When God gave the people His law at Sinai, He told them that they must never worship any other gods (Exodus 20:3). In fact, they must not worship anything or anyone else aside from Him: no angels, no false gods, no demons, no idols, objects or statues.

So, in the book of Revelation, when the apostle John made the mistake of bowing down to an angel, the angel immediately stopped him.

Revelation 19:9–10

⁹ And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb.” And he added, “These are true words that come from God.” ¹⁰ Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said, “No, don’t worship me. I am a servant of God, just like you and your brothers and sisters who testify about their faith in Jesus. Worship only God. For the essence of prophecy is to give a clear witness for Jesus.”



It was right of the angel to stop John from worshipping him. However, there are passages in the Old Testament that talk about a certain “angel of the LORD” who is totally different from the angel that John met. Where do we see this?

First example: Moses at the un-burning bush

Exodus 3:1–6

¹ One day Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian. He led the flock far into the wilderness and came to Sinai, the mountain of God. ² There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the middle of a bush. Moses stared in amazement. Though the bush was engulfed in flames, it didn’t burn up. ³ “This is amazing,” Moses said to himself. “Why isn’t that bush burning up? I must go see it.”



⁴ When the LORD saw Moses coming to take a closer look, God called to him from the middle of the bush, “Moses! Moses!”

“Here I am!” Moses replied.

⁵ “Do not come any closer,” the LORD warned. “Take off your sandals, for you are standing on holy ground. ⁶ I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” When Moses heard this, he covered his face because he was afraid to look at God.

Who is this “angel of the LORD”? He said that He is Yahweh Himself, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob! Even though God is spirit (John 4:24) and is invisible, when He appears as the angel of the LORD, humans can see Him.



The angel
of the LORD

IS

YAHWEH,
the God of...



Abraham



Isaac



Jacob

Second example: Israel at Bochim

When God gave the Israelites the Promised Land, He told them to remove all the Canaanites. However, they disobeyed Him. So the “angel of the LORD” went to speak to them. He said that He was the one who rescued them from Egypt.

Judges 2:1

The angel of the LORD went up from Gilgal to Bokim and said to the Israelites, “I brought you out of Egypt into this land that I swore to give your ancestors, and I said I would never break my covenant with you.

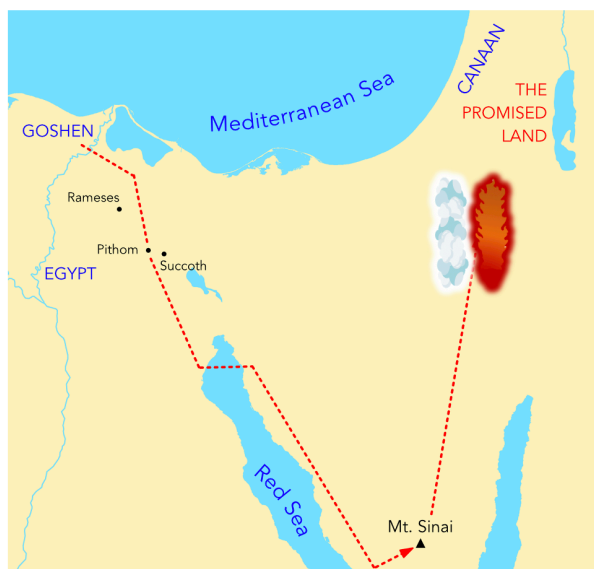
The angel of the LORD
brought Israel out of Egypt

In the book of Exodus, we know that it was Yahweh Himself who saved Israel from Egypt. But now the angel of the LORD said that He was the one who did it. Who is this angel of the LORD? The Bible says the “angel of the LORD” is Jesus Himself!

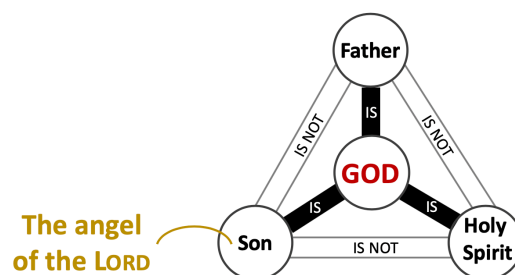
Jude 5

So I want to remind you, though you already know these things, that Jesus first rescued the nation of Israel from Egypt, but later he destroyed those who did not remain faithful.

Jesus
rescued Israel from Egypt



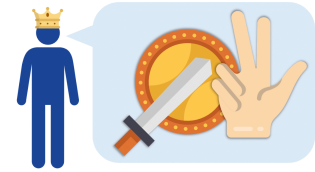
The angel of the LORD is actually Jesus, God the Son.



Before He took on a human body in the New Testament, He appeared to people in the Old Testament as the “angel of the LORD”.

Third example: David at Araunah's threshing floor

One time, King David, under the influence of Satan, decided to count the number of fighting men he had in Israel. Perhaps it was because he wanted to see how powerful and strong his army was, instead of trusting in God's power. God got angry with David and sent an angel to punish the people.



1 Chronicles 21:15–18

¹⁵ And God sent an angel to destroy Jerusalem. But just as the angel was preparing to destroy it, the LORD relented and said to the death angel, “Stop! That is enough!” At that moment the angel of the LORD was standing by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

¹⁶ David looked up and saw the angel of the LORD standing between heaven and earth with his sword drawn, reaching out over Jerusalem. So David and the leaders of Israel put on burlap to show their deep distress and fell face down on the ground.

¹⁷ And David said to God, “I am the one who called for the census! I am the one who has sinned and done wrong! But these people are as innocent as sheep—what have they done? O LORD my God, let your anger fall against me and my family, but do not destroy your people.” ¹⁸ Then the angel of the LORD told Gad to instruct David to go up and build an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.



But then, David saw another “angel”, this one called “the angel of the LORD”. David recognised him as God and called Him “O LORD”, which means “Yahweh”. And the “angel” did not stop him from calling Him that name. It is because “the angel of the LORD” is really Yahweh Himself! This is Jesus, the Son, before He came as a human. This same Jesus in the New Testament is the One who judged in the Old Testament.

(Think also of how the LORD carried out judgment in other Old Testament events like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 18:16–19:29. Jesus, God the Son, was involved in these judgments as He is Yahweh.)

But the “angel of the LORD” is not the only name that Jesus had in the Old Testament. Jesus, God the Son is also known as “the word of the LORD”.

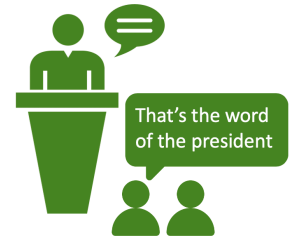


II. Jesus: the Word of the LORD

When we read the Bible and see the phrase, “word of the LORD”, we may think that it just means that God spoke.

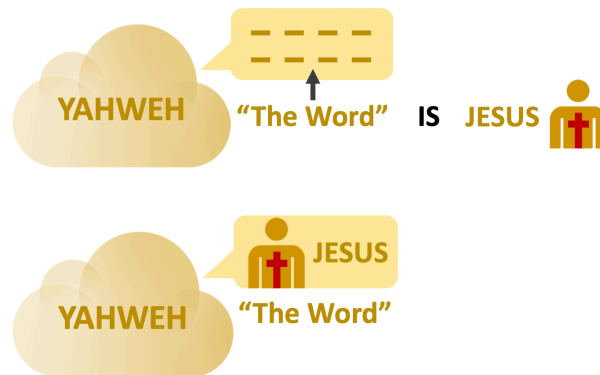
This is because if someone says this is the “word of the president”, we rightly think that it just means that the president said something.

However, the apostle John says that “The Word” is actually Jesus, God the Son.



John 1:14

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.



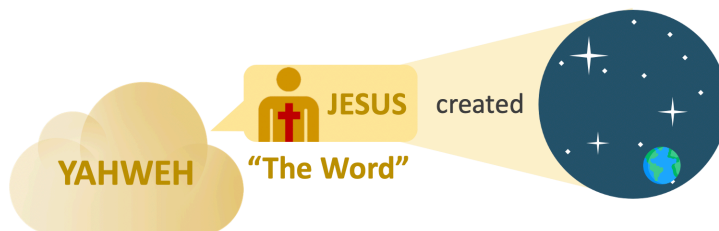
Jesus is God’s Word that put on a human body so others could see, hear and touch God.

This is something that is very amazing and not quite easy to understand, but it is true. In fact, Jesus was with God right from the beginning, at creation.

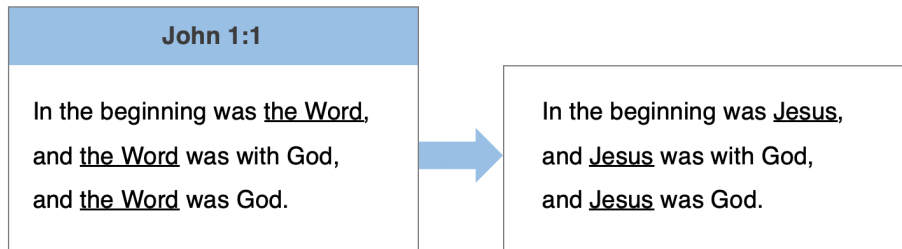
John 1:1–3

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.



If we replace “The Word” with “Jesus”, this is what the passage says:



In the Old Testament, “the word of the LORD” appears a lot. The Word has power and can:

- rescue people (Psalm 107:20),
- control nature (Psalm 147:15–18) and
- create the universe (Psalm 33:4–9).

And the Word is always successful in doing what God wants. Jesus the Son always completes what God sends Him to do.

Isaiah 55:10–11

¹⁰ “The rain and snow come down from the heavens
and stay on the ground to water the earth.

They cause the grain to grow,
producing seed for the farmer
and bread for the hungry.

¹¹ It is the same with my word.
I send it out, and it always produces fruit.
It will accomplish all I want it to,
and it will prosper everywhere I send it.

In fact, we often see God’s Word, or God the Son, going out to give instructions to people.

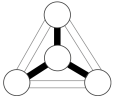
Isaiah 38:4–6 (NIV)

⁴ Then the word of the LORD came to Isaiah: ⁵ “Go and tell
Hezekiah, ‘This is what the LORD, the God of your father
David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears;
I will add fifteen years to your life. ⁶ And I will deliver you
and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria. I will
defend this city.



Other examples of the “word of the LORD” include: Jeremiah 2:1–2;
Ezekiel 20:2–3; Hosea 1:1. This is all in the Old Testament.

But do we see the Trinity in the New Testament? Yes.

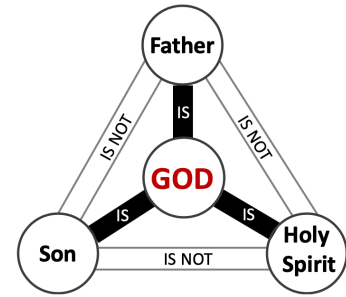


C. The Trinity in the New Testament

In the New Testament, there are many verses where the Father, the Son or the Holy Spirit are being addressed as God. In fact, Jesus Himself said that all three Persons are the same God.

Matthew 28:18–19

¹⁸ Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.



Jesus did not say baptise in the names. Jesus just said “name”, one name. This means there is only one God. But three Persons.

Sometimes, people also use the word “Godhead” to mean all three Persons. God is indeed far more incredible than our human minds can imagine!

(See more examples of the three Persons of the Godhead being addressed as God: Acts 5:3–4; 1 Corinthians 2:10–11; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Ephesians 2:18, 4:30; Titus 2:13; 2 Peter 1:21.)

It is Very Important to Know that God is Three and Also One

Why is it important to know this? Because only a God who is three and also one can:

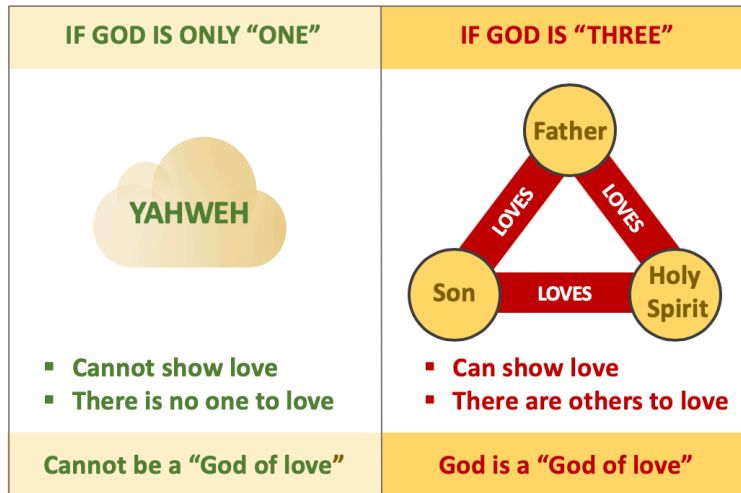
- I. be a God of love
- II. save us
- III. be with us all the time while still running the universe!

I. Love

The Bible tells us that God is love (1 John 4:8).

But before He created man, was God already a God of love? Could God show love or experience love? Or did God need man before He could show love?

- If God were just a single person, then no, He could not be a God of love before man was created. To love, He needs someone to show that love to.
- But because God is three, God could love even before He created anything or anyone! The Father loves the Son and the Holy Spirit and they love Him back. God was a God of love before man ever existed.



God was never ever lonely. God was very happy and complete within Himself because there are three Persons.

Some people think that God created man because He was lonely. This is not true. God never needed man to be complete.

And when the Bible says that "God is love", God is infinitely loving from eternity past to eternity future, even without man.

II. Save mankind

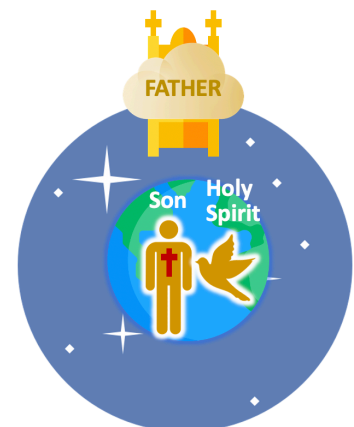
Only God who is three Persons can actually save mankind. If God were just one, He would not have been able to do it. Why?

- If God were just one, He would have to leave His throne in heaven and come down to earth as a human. Then who would run the universe while He is a man with human limitations?
- If God were just one, what would happen when He died on the cross? The world would be left with no God in charge.

But because God is three and one:

- God the Father never gives up control of the universe. He is always in charge and in total control.
- Jesus, God the Son, could come to earth as a sinless man and die in mankind's place, fully paying the price for mankind's sin.
- God the Holy Spirit could help Jesus as He lived on earth as a man.

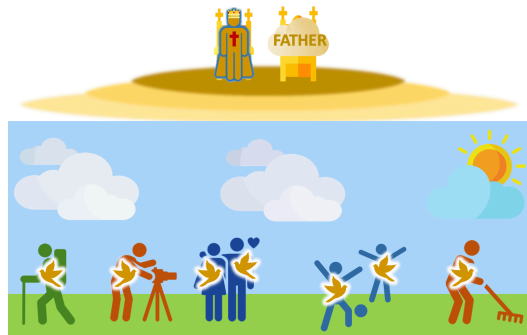
Only a three-in-one God can continue to rule the universe and be in control while at the same time, die for mankind. It is incredibly important that we have a God who is a Trinity!



III. Be with us all the time

Because Yahweh is three, He can be everywhere present at the same time. For example:

- God the Father can sustain and manage everything He created.
- God the Son can also be everywhere at the same time but chooses to meet with mankind in specific locations or “meeting places” like with Moses at the un-burning bush or with Israel at the Temple’s Holy of Holies. And in His human body, He met with people at specific places while on earth and now in heaven, Jesus in His human body is at the Father’s right hand.
- And the Holy Spirit can live in all believers and guide us all individually at the same time.



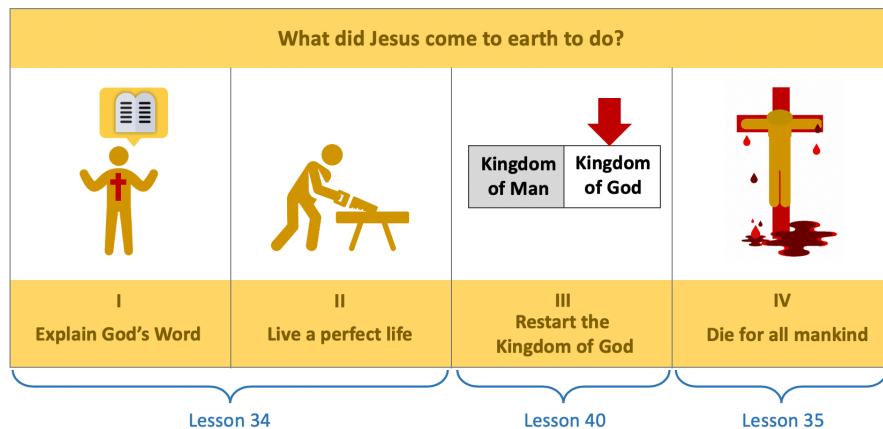
God can do all that at the same time because God is a Trinity.

This is why understanding the Trinity is important. It gives us reasons to believe that God is indeed a God of love, that He can save us, and He can be with us all the time.

In the New Testament, when God came to earth, it was God the Son, Jesus, who came to earth as a human.

God the Son, Jesus: His Life on Earth

What was Jesus’ life on earth like? What did He come to do? What was His “job”?



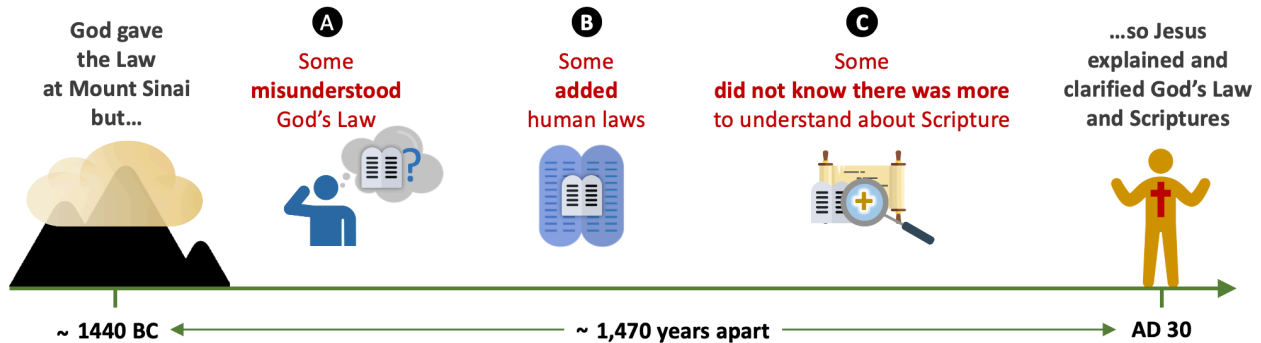
We will cover the first two in this lesson and the next two in future lessons.



I. Explain and clarify God's Word



After God saved the nation of Israel from Egypt, He gave them His Law on Mount Sinai. However, there were some problems with the way the people treated God's Law:



One of the important things that Jesus did on earth was that He explained and made clear the Law of God and the Scriptures.



A. People misunderstood the Law: **Jesus explained the Law**

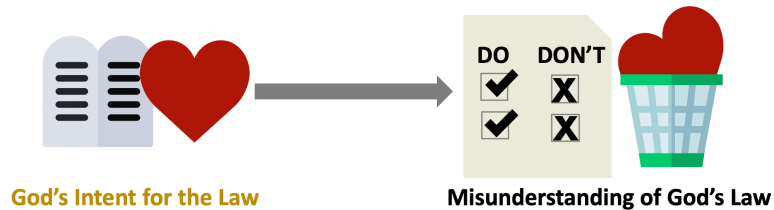
When Jesus was about 30 years old, He started His ministry. One of the first things He did was to take His disciples up to a mountain and teach them there. This is often called the "Sermon on the Mount".

In the Old Testament, Yahweh had also taught the Israelites on a mountain. On Mount Sinai, God spoke audibly to more than two million Israelites. We can actually call this the "First Sermon on the Mount"! Why? Because on Mount Sinai, Yahweh taught the people His Law.



And what did Jesus teach in the "Second Sermon on the Mount"? He taught about what Yahweh taught in the first sermon! Jesus taught, explained and clarified the Law of God!

What did Jesus say? He told the people that they had misunderstood the Law. The Law was always about people's heart and their attitude towards God. But they had changed it to something else. So Jesus turned their attention back to the true heart of the Law.



But what really surprised the people was the way Jesus taught. The Pharisees, scribes and other teachers of the law would teach in this way:

- "I believe the Lord is saying..." or
- "According to my understanding, God is saying..."

But when Jesus taught, He taught as a person who had full authority to clarify and explain the Law!

Matthew 5:21–22

²¹ "You have heard that our ancestors were told, 'You must not murder. If you commit murder, you are subject to judgment.' ²² But I say, if you are even angry with someone, you are subject to judgment! If you call someone an idiot, you are in danger of being brought before the court. And if you curse someone, you are in danger of the fires of hell.

Jesus used this pattern when He taught: "You have heard... But I say..." (See for example, Matthew 5:28, 32, 34, 39, 44).



Jesus was saying that He had the right to interpret and explain God's Word. And He really could, since He wrote it!

Matthew 7:28–29

²⁸ When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, ²⁹ for he taught with real authority—quite unlike their teachers of religious law.



B. People added to the Law: **Jesus challenged what they added by living differently**

Many of the religious leaders treated God's Law as a list of dos and don'ts.

They were so afraid of breaking the Law that they made up their own additional rules to prevent themselves from breaking God's actual laws.

As a Jewish teacher (rabbi), Jesus was expected to follow the list of religious traditions about how teachers should behave.

But Jesus refused to follow man-made laws. Jesus lived only by God's Law.

For example:

- Jewish teachers were not supposed to speak with women in public, especially non-Jewish women they didn't know. But Jesus spoke with many women in public. He even spoke alone to a Samaritan woman He didn't know (John 4:1–29).



- Under man-made Jewish law, women were supposed to follow a strict dress code, but Jesus allowed women to loosen their hair in front of Him (Luke 7:36–50; John 12:1–8).



- God had given rules about the Sabbath but the Pharisees added to it and insisted that people follow their rules. And instead of understanding and following what God intended in giving the law, they heartlessly and coldly treated it just as a list of instructions. But Jesus did not do that. Jesus allowed His disciples to break the Pharisees' rules about the Sabbath (Matthew 12:1–13; John 9:1–16).

When the Pharisees tried to scold Jesus about His disciples breaking man-made Sabbath rules, Jesus challenged them.

He said that He had the right to interpret the rules about the Sabbath, because He, as Yahweh, was the Person who had given the rules!



Matthew 12:1–8

¹ At about that time Jesus was walking through some grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, so they began breaking off some heads of grain and eating them.

² But some Pharisees saw them do it and protested, “Look, your disciples are breaking the law by harvesting grain on the Sabbath.”

³ Jesus said to them, “Haven’t you read in the Scriptures what David did when he and his companions were hungry? ⁴ He went into the house of God, and he and his companions broke the law by eating the sacred loaves of bread that only the priests are allowed to eat. ⁵ And haven’t you read in the law of Moses that the priests on duty in the Temple may work on the Sabbath?

⁶ I tell you, there is one here who is even greater than the Temple! ⁷ But you would not have condemned my innocent disciples if you knew the meaning of this Scripture: ‘I want you to show mercy, not offer sacrifices.’ ⁸ For the Son of Man is Lord, even over the Sabbath!”



Jesus reminded them that God’s Law was given from a loving Father to a treasured son (Israel) and the people were to live in love and mercy towards each other. God’s Law was not a list of dos and don’ts to suffocate people.

In the way that Jesus lived and behaved, He was showing that people should live according to God’s Word and not on twisted man-made ideas of His laws.



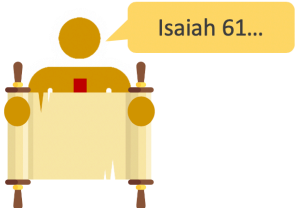
C. People did not know there was more to understand about God’s Word:
Jesus taught and interpreted Scripture further, especially explaining what the Bible teaches about Himself

Jesus treated the Old Testament as real history when He taught and clarified God’s Word. But He did more. Jesus also explained it in a way the religious leaders had never heard before.

He took familiar passages and interpreted it to give the people new understanding.



For example, He told the people that the Old Testament prophecies about the promised Saviour were about Him. He is the Messiah that they had been waiting for. He in fact, is Yahweh!

At the beginning of His teaching ministry, Jesus went to the synagogue and read from Isaiah 60 and 61. With how He read this passage, He even split events that the Jews thought would happen together.

| This is what Jesus did: | This is where Jesus was quoting from: |
|---|---|
| <p>Luke 4:16–21</p> <p>¹⁶ When he came to the village of Nazareth, his boyhood home, he went as usual to the synagogue on the Sabbath and stood up to read the Scriptures.</p> <p>¹⁷ The scroll of Isaiah the prophet was handed to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where this was written:</p> <p>¹⁸ “The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free,</p> <p>¹⁹ and that the time of the LORD’s favor has come.”</p> <p>²⁰ He rolled up the scroll, handed it back to the attendant, and sat down. All eyes in the synagogue looked at him intently. ²¹ Then he began to speak to them. <u>“The Scripture you’ve just heard has been fulfilled this very day!”</u></p>  | <p>Isaiah 61:1–2a</p> <p>¹ The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is upon me, for the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted and to proclaim that captives will be released and prisoners will be freed.</p> <p>² He has sent me to tell those who mourn that the time of the LORD’s favor has come,</p> <p>(This is what Jesus did at His first coming.)</p> <p>Isaiah 61:2b</p> <p>and with it, the day of God’s anger against their enemies.</p> <p>(This is what Jesus will do at His second coming.)</p> |



Jesus also combined different passages from different parts of the Old Testament to give a fuller picture of who He is and what He would do. For example:

| Jesus combined... | ...when He said: |
|--|---|
|  <p>Isaiah 53: the suffering Messiah who dies</p> <p>and</p>  <p>Daniel 7: the "Son of Man" who reigns</p> | <p>Matthew 20:28 For even the <u>Son of Man</u> came not to be served but to serve others and to <u>give his life</u> as a ransom for many."</p> |
| to explain that the Son of Man would suffer... | |

He also took pictures from other Old Testament passages like Psalm 110 and Zechariah chapters 9–14 to put together a picture of the Messiah that described His life and death.

No rabbi or teacher of the Law ever did or could do what Jesus did. We also, cannot do what Jesus did with Scripture. But Jesus could combine Scripture in a unique way without error because He is God Himself, the One who wrote all Scripture.

How did the religious leaders react to Jesus' teaching on God's Word?

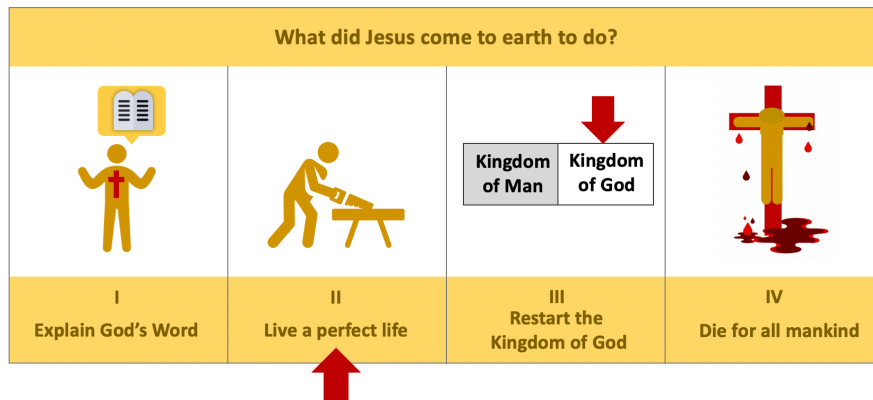
The way that Jesus taught, with such authority, shocked the Jews and made the teachers and leaders very angry.

- They were angry that He could show such authority. So they demanded that He prove that He had authority by performing more signs and miracles (Matthew 12:38–42). But Jesus refused. He had already performed so many signs to prove who He is, but they chose not to believe because their hearts were already hard towards Him.
- They were insulted and embarrassed that Jesus kept correcting them and telling them that they were wrong to make up rules.
- They tried to kill Him for claiming He is Yahweh (Luke 4:28–30).



Even though one of Jesus' "jobs" on earth was to explain God's Word, the religious leaders did not appreciate His teaching.

Another “job” that Jesus came to earth to do was to live a perfect life.



II. Live a perfect life

Why did He have to live a perfect life? There are two reasons:

- A. He had to fulfil the Mosaic Law and also,
- B. give mankind a good example of how to live their lives.



A. Jesus lived a perfect life to fulfil God's Law

For an unrighteous person to become righteous, that person needs to live an absolutely perfect, sinless life in obedience to God. This was only possible before the Fall in Genesis 3. Innocent Adam and Eve were created in the image of God and without sin, so it was possible for them to live a righteous life but they failed. Ever since the Fall, the Bible records that fallen mankind has no way of living a sinless, obedient life.

So, Jesus came as a human to live a perfect life by God's standards and He planned to “give” or credit His perfect life to anyone who trusted in Him. Only in this way can mankind have peace with God.

Matthew 5:17 (NIV)

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have not come to abolish these things but to fulfill them.”

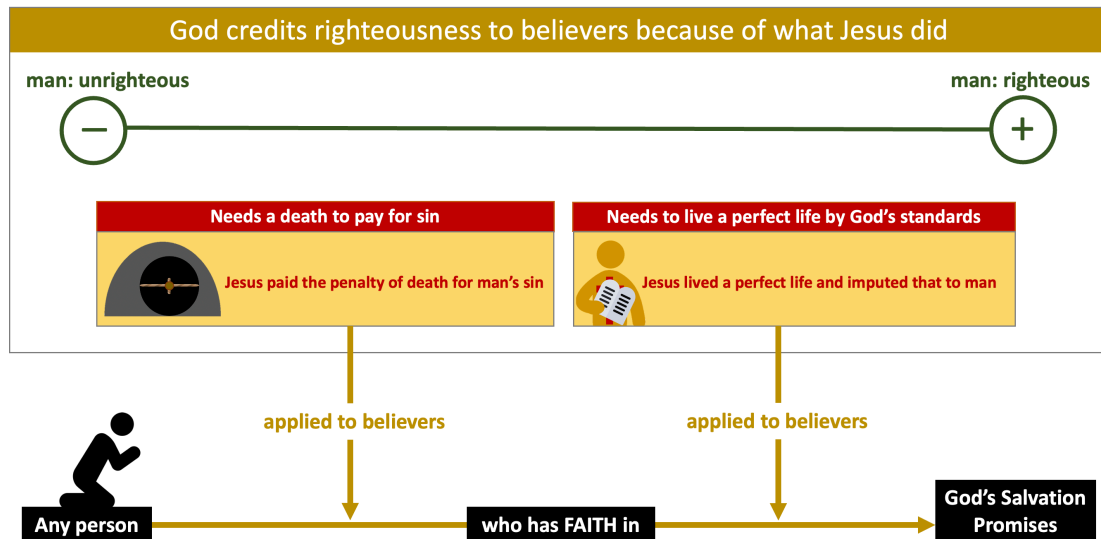
1 Peter 2:22

He never sinned, nor ever deceived anyone.

This was the perfect life that Jesus credited, or deposited, into people who trusted in Him.

Romans 5:18–19

¹⁸ Yes, Adam's one sin brings condemnation for everyone, but Christ's one act of righteousness brings a right relationship with God and new life for everyone. ¹⁹ Because one person disobeyed God, many became sinners. But because one other person obeyed God, many will be made righteous.

**B. Jesus lived a perfect life to leave believers an example of how to live**

Yahweh designed man specifically so that God the Son could live in, or inhabit, or incarnate Himself in a human body. In God's divine plan, it would be through a human body that He fully reveals Himself to His creatures, both humans and spirit beings.

Ephesians 3:10–11

¹⁰ God's purpose in all this was to use the church to display his wisdom in its rich variety to all the unseen rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. ¹¹ This was his eternal plan, which he carried out through Christ Jesus our Lord.

(See also 1 Corinthians 4:9, 11:10.)

And in a human body, God the Son would show mankind how to live in obedience to God. When Jesus lived on earth as a human, He did not depend on His godly or divine powers to live a perfect life. Jesus gave up the authority to use His divine powers. This is how the apostle Paul explained it:

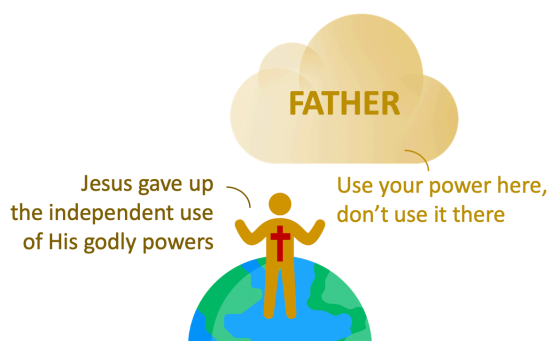
Philippians 2:6–7a

⁶ Though he was God,
he did not think of equality with God
as something to cling to.
⁷ Instead, he gave up his divine privileges;
he took the humble position of a slave
and was born as a human being.

What does it mean when Jesus “gave up his divine privileges”? Other translations say:

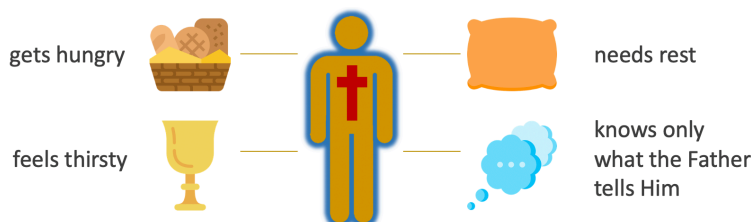
| NLT | ESV | NIV | NKJV |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| “gave up his divine privileges” | “emptied himself” | “made himself nothing” | “made himself of no reputation” |

Here’s a good way to understand this:



- Though Jesus was fully God all the time, while He was on earth as a man, He surrendered the authority to use His godly abilities.
- Instead of deciding for Himself when He should or should not use His divine powers, He listened to God the Father.
- Only when God the Father instructed Him to, then Jesus used His divine abilities. Otherwise, He did not.
- But at no point did He ever lose His godly powers.

This means that as a human, Jesus lived with the same limitations as humans: He became hungry, He became thirsty and He needed to rest when He was tired. Jesus showed His human limitations in the way He lived.



For example, Jesus was also not all-knowing just as humans are not all-knowing. When He talked about His second coming, He said He didn’t know the timing. Only God the Father knew.

Matthew 24:36

“However, no one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son himself. Only the Father knows.”

When Jesus confronted a demon, even though the demon recognised that Jesus is God the Son, Jesus had to ask for the demon's name.

Luke 8:30–31

³⁰ Jesus demanded, "What is your name?"

"Legion," he replied, for he was filled with many demons. ³¹ The demons kept begging Jesus not to send them into the bottomless pit.

Occasionally, Jesus did perform miracles to show that He is God, like the time He controlled the weather when He was with His disciples in a boat.

Matthew 8:24–27

²⁴ Suddenly, a fierce storm struck the lake, with waves breaking into the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. ²⁵ The disciples went and woke him up, shouting, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!" ²⁶ Jesus responded, "Why are you afraid? You have so little faith!" Then he got up and rebuked the wind and waves, and suddenly there was a great calm. ²⁷ The disciples were amazed. "Who is this man?" they asked. "Even the winds and waves obey him!"



However, Jesus didn't perform these huge miracles very often.

Instead, most of the time, in the way He lived, Jesus only relied on what other human believers have access to: prayer, God's Word and the Holy Spirit.

Why did He do this?


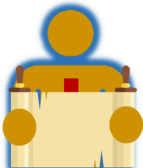


Jesus was leaving believers an example of how to live as obedient disciples of God with just what God gives us. For all who have trusted Him as Saviour, He gave this instruction:

Matthew 16:24

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me."

(See also Matthew 11:29–30.)

To live successfully, Jesus did four things:

| i Jesus prayed to God the Father | ii Jesus lived by God's Word | iii Jesus relied on the Holy Spirit's power | iv Jesus practised sanctification |
|---|---|--|---|
|  |  |  |  |
| | | | Obey the Father |



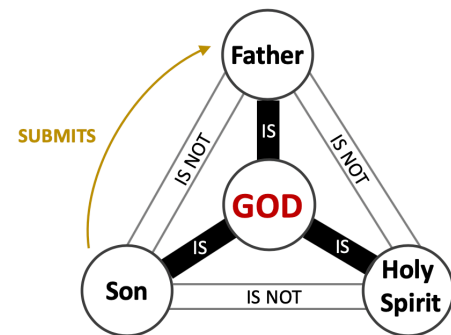
i. Jesus prayed to God the Father

Even though Jesus is God, He spent a lot of time in prayer with God the Father.

| | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| Mark 1:35 Before daybreak the next morning, Jesus got up and went out to an isolated place to pray. | Luke 5:16 But Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness for prayer. | Luke 6:12–13 ¹² One day soon afterward Jesus went up on a mountain to pray, and he prayed to God all night. ¹³ At daybreak he called together all of his disciples and chose twelve of them to be apostles. | Luke 9:18a One day Jesus left the crowds to pray alone. |
|---|--|---|---|

Why did Jesus do this?

- One reason could be because He wanted to show us how we are to submit to God the Father. God the Father should be the One guiding us in our lives and we are to live in humble submission to Him.
- Another reason could be that Jesus wanted to show us how we are to submit to each other in love. Even though Jesus is God and part of the Trinity, meaning He is equal in standing to the Father and Holy Spirit, He willingly obeys the Father's instructions. Jesus is certainly not less important than God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, yet He submits.



In the same way, Jesus also expects us to follow this form of submission in human relationships, even when we may be equal in status. For example, in marriage, even though husbands and wives are equal in status, the wife is asked to submit to her husband out of love. This does not mean she is less important.

So Jesus was leaving us an example of how we are to humbly submit to God and each other out of love.



ii. Jesus lived by God's Word

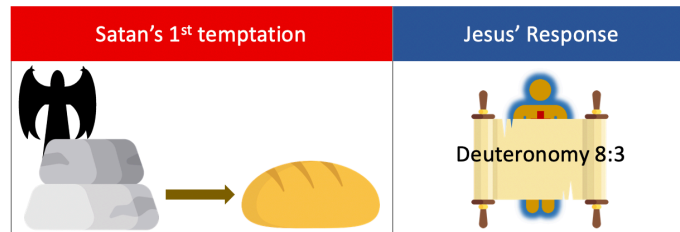
Jesus also relied on God's Word. When Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness, He did not use His godly power to fight Satan.

Instead, He faced the devil as a human. He used God's Word and quoted it in reply to the devil's lies. (The account is in Matthew 4:1–11.)

Matthew 4:4, 7, 10

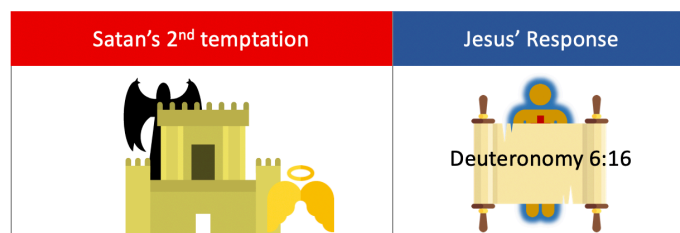
[**First temptation:** Satan told Jesus to change the stones to bread. Jesus responded by quoting from Deuteronomy 8:3.]

⁴ But Jesus told him, “No! The Scriptures say,
‘People do not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”



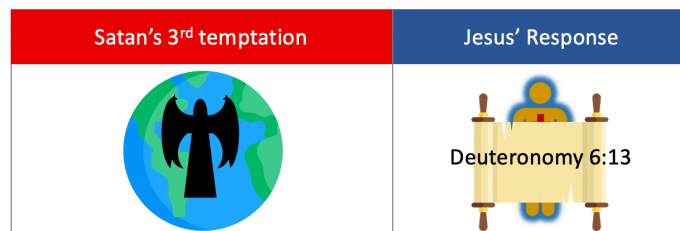
[**Second temptation:** Satan told Jesus to throw Himself off the roof of the temple and His angels would catch Him. Jesus responded by quoting from Deuteronomy 6:16.]

⁷ Jesus responded, “The Scriptures also say, ‘You must not test the LORD your God.’”



[**Third temptation:** Satan told Jesus to worship him and he would give Jesus the whole world. Jesus responded by quoting from Deuteronomy 6:13.]

¹⁰ “Get out of here, Satan,” Jesus told him. “For the Scriptures say,
‘You must worship the LORD your God
and serve only him.’”



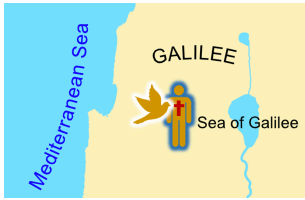


Why did Jesus choose not to use His godly power? Because He wanted to be an example to us on how we also can use God's Word to protect ourselves against Satan's lies. Jesus wants us to know God's Word well, so we will know the truth and not be easily tricked by Satan.



iii. Jesus relied on the power of the Holy Spirit

Jesus also relied on the Holy Spirit to guide Him as He lived. He said, “the Spirit of the Lord is upon me” (Luke 4:18).

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| <p>Matthew 3:16 After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and he saw the <u>Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him.</u></p>  | <p>Matthew 4:1 Then Jesus was <u>led by the Spirit</u> into the wilderness to be tempted there by the devil.</p>  | <p>Luke 4:14 Then Jesus returned to Galilee, <u>filled with the Holy Spirit's power.</u></p>  |
|--|--|---|

This same Holy Spirit that Jesus relied on is the same Holy Spirit that all believers have. This is what Jesus told His disciples.

Acts 1:4–5, 8

⁴ Once when he was eating with them, he commanded them, “Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift he promised, as I told you before. ⁵ John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”



Paul also says the same thing.

1 Corinthians 6:19–20

¹⁹ Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, ²⁰ for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.

God the Holy Spirit lives in all believers. He is our guide and He gives us the spiritual help we need to make right choices and live obedient lives to God.

Just as Jesus relied on the Holy Spirit's guidance, we too can rely on the Holy Spirit to live lives that honour God.



Obey the Father

iv. Jesus practised sanctification

As we have seen, sanctification is the process of building trust and obedience towards God. This is true for every believer.

In the garden of Eden, though Adam and Eve were without sin, they had to learn trust and obedience to God. It is the same with Jesus. As a man with no sin, He also had to learn and practise trusting and obeying God the Father. He began right from birth.

Luke 2:52

Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and all the people.

As a human, He gave up the authority to use His godly powers. He humbled Himself and learnt to obey God the Father in every situation. He obeyed all the way, even to the point of dying on the cross!

Philippians 2:7b–8

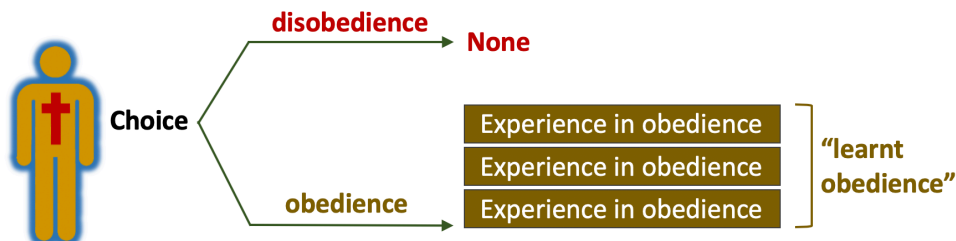
^{7b} When he appeared in human form,

⁸ he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross.

Every time He obeyed the Father, He was building up experience in obedience.

Hebrews 5:8

Even though Jesus was God's Son, he learned obedience from the things he suffered.



It is important to understand that learning obedience does not mean sin is involved. It is learning and practising a skill.

For example, a person learning to ride a bike starts off not knowing how to ride. But by listening to instruction and practising, one can go from not knowing how to ride a bike to being very good at it.



“Learn something”
through practice and experience

So Jesus, though He was sinless as a human, had to learn obedience too.

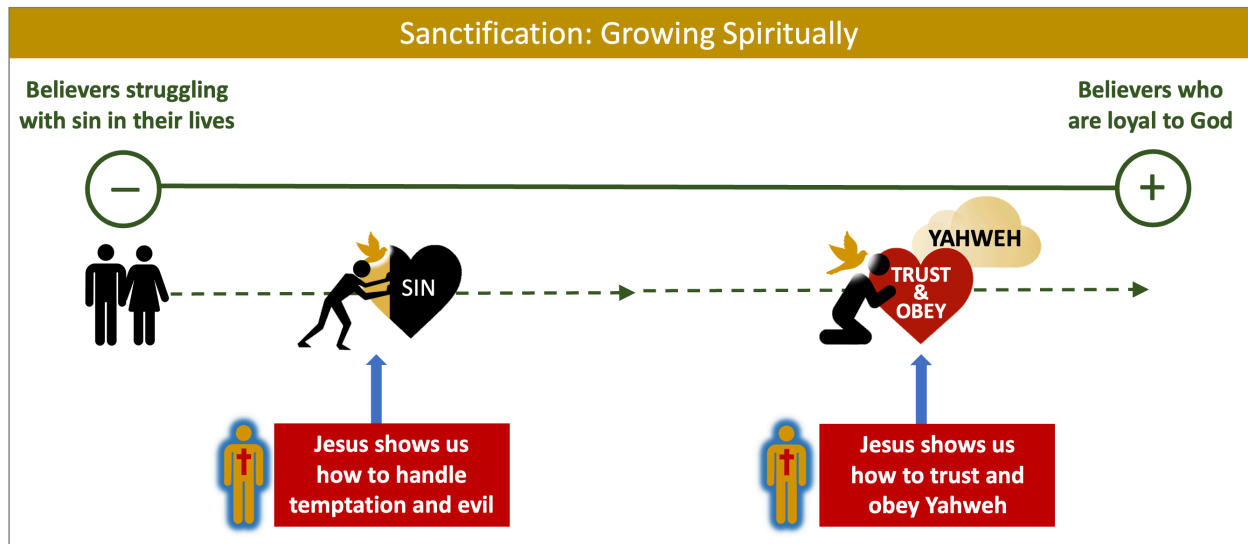
This lifelong journey of building trust and obedience to God the Father is the process of sanctification.

John 8:28b

I do nothing on my own but say only what the Father taught me.

Jesus used the “tools” available to all of us:

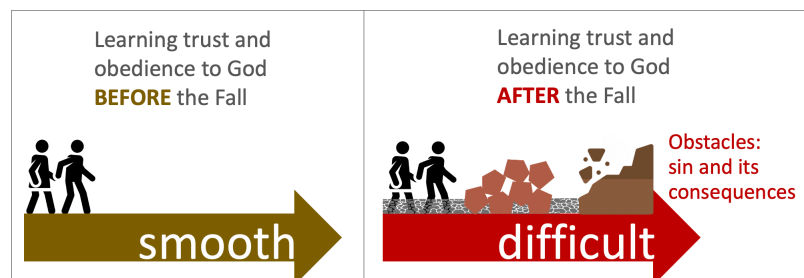
- prayer,
- Scripture and
- the power of the Holy Spirit.



We Follow Jesus' Sanctification Journey

We would be wise to follow Jesus' sanctification journey. However, we need to know that our sanctification is much harder. Unlike Adam and Eve before the Fall, and unlike Jesus who never sinned, our journey of obedience to God is filled with obstacles.

We have a corrupted sin nature that is like a magnet, constantly drawing us towards sin.



Nevertheless, Jesus' way of learning obedience applies to us. God the Father has given us the same "tools". We need to use them if we want to make progress in our sanctification.



Neglecting any of the "tools" will only hurt us and cause us to stumble and sin:

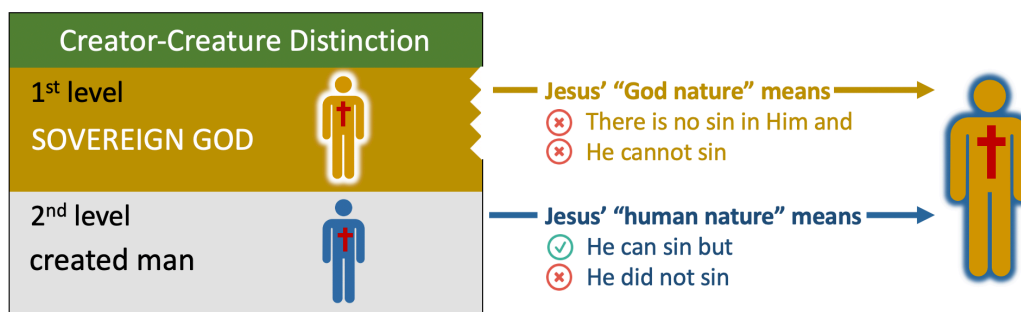
- If we don't pray, we are relying on ourselves.
- If we don't read God's Word diligently, we have no understanding of how to live in obedience.
- If we ignore the Holy Spirit, we will certainly fail as disciples!

Therefore, we need to pay attention to how Jesus lived as a human and use the "tools" God gave us to sanctify us.

Was it possible for Jesus as a man to sin?

Some people have wondered how Jesus' life on earth can be a model for us to follow. After all, Jesus is God and as God, He is not able to sin! So there is no way we can live up to the way He lived.

Here is something important to consider. As the God-man, Jesus never violated, or destroyed the Creator-creature distinction.



More...

Holy Yahweh and created man “met” in a human body but did not mix together. Jesus is 100% God and 100% man at the same time.

- Because He is God, there is no sin in Him and He cannot sin.
- But as a human, Jesus also did not sin. Jesus could have sinned, because He has free will. But every time He had to make a choice, He made the right choice and did not sin. (Compare Jesus to Adam. The first man originally had no sin nature and had free will too. But faced with a choice of obeying or disobeying God, Adam made a rebellious decision and sinned. Jesus however didn't sin.)

Some believers also wonder if Jesus can really understand what it is like to live as a human and face difficulties and temptations.

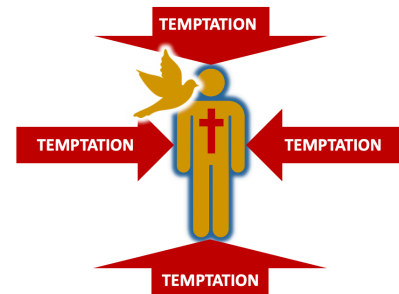
Actually, we could say that Jesus faced more temptation than any other man. Why? The fastest way to get rid of temptation is to give in to it. For example, if you are tempted to eat a piece of chocolate, the moment you eat it, the temptation is gone. But if you never eat it, the temptation remains and may even grow!



Jesus was successful in overcoming all temptations and He never dwelled on a temptation. He never gave the temptation power to control Him.

But this meant the pressure to sin kept building in Him because the temptation never left.

Nevertheless, Jesus never gave in. The Holy Spirit gave Him the power to resist temptation.



Acts 10:38

And you know that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. Then Jesus went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

As a man, Jesus experienced life and faced many of the same temptations we face in our lives. This is why Jesus is the best mediator for us because He understands us completely. He has been tempted like we have. He is understanding and sympathetic towards us. He is the perfect High Priest, able to plead on our behalf before God the Father.

Hebrews 4:15

This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin.

As believers who struggle with evil, we can follow Jesus' example and rely on God the Father, His Word and the Holy Spirit to help us overcome sin and evil in our lives.

And because Jesus is human and understands completely what we are like, He is the One most qualified to judge or evaluate our lives. In fact, God the Father has appointed Jesus to be the Judge of all people.

Acts 17:31

For he has set a day for judging the world with justice by the man he has appointed, and he proved to everyone who this is by raising him from the dead.”

When all people, believers and unbelievers, face God’s judgment, they will not face a Judge who has no understanding of what being a human is like. Jesus is human and when He evaluates our life, we will have no excuses. We wouldn’t be able to say, “Well, you’re not human so you don’t understand what it’s like to be tempted!” Rather, Jesus can say to us, “I faced that situation too. But I asked the Holy Spirit to help me and I did not fail. You should have done the same.”

When our lives are evaluated, we will be judged by One who is our peer (equal), that is, we will be evaluated by a human Judge and in this way, His judgment on our life will be very fair.

Discussion Questions

Discuss the following questions as a group or use them for personal reflection.

1. As a man, Jesus lived by God’s Word, praying to the Father and relying on the guidance of the Holy Spirit. What can you learn from Him for your own walk with God?
2. Jesus was loving to those who listened and trusted Him. He was harsh to those who did not listen to Him but remained proud and stubborn. In your own life, have you been able to accept these two aspects of Jesus? When through the Holy Spirit He scolds you or urges you to repent, how have you reacted?
3. Although the Trinity is hard to understand, it is still true. In your own words, can you explain the Trinity and also explain why it is important?



Pre-reading for next lesson: Matthew 26:1–27:61; Luke 22–23; John 18–19