

The Book of Luke

Who Is Jesus Christ?

Lesson #3 for April 18, 2015

Scriptures: Luke 4:16-30; 6:5; 9:18-27; Ephesians 1:3-5; 2 Peter 1:16-18.

1. The question “Who is Jesus Christ?” must be answered by every human being living on planet earth in one way or another. Some respond to that question by refusing to answer it.
2. People have said many wonderful things about Jesus.

People can admire the works of Jesus, honor His words, extol His patience, advocate His nonviolence, acclaim His decisiveness, praise His selflessness, and stand speechless at the cruel end of His life. Many may even be ready to accept Jesus as a good man who tried to set things right—to infuse fairness where there was injustice, to offer healing where there was sickness, and to bring comfort where there was only misery. (*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Sabbath afternoon, April 11.)

3. Anyone who reads the Gospels must have questions raised in his mind. Jesus is described as “the Son of Man” and also as “the Son of God.” Could a real, live human being living on planet earth be fully God and fully man at the same time?
4. Read Luke 4:16-30 and compare John 3:19. Jesus demonstrated that He understood Aramaic and Hebrew, and He probably knew Greek, and possibly Latin as well! Why did Jesus’s hometown people want to kill Him? They could not accept the idea that God might have preferred a Gentile over a Jew. If one believes he is going to be saved because he is descended from Abraham, he cannot accept the idea that God might prefer Gentiles!
5. Read Luke 7:17-23; and compare Matthew 11:2-19. John the Baptist was languishing in prison. He had accused Herod of taking his brother’s wife. But, like the rest of the Jews, he looked forward to Jesus setting up an earthly kingdom. He could not understand why Jesus did not find some way to release him from prison. So, he sent two of his disciples to inquire about Jesus. Jesus did not immediately answer their questions. The two watched all day long as He taught, preached, and healed people of many diseases, cleansed the lepers, even raised the dead. Then, Jesus told them to go back and tell John what they had seen. This is an excellent example of the fact that trust or faith is based on evidence. (*Steps to Christ* 105.2) Try to imagine yourself as one of those messengers. What would you have said to John? How do you think John the Baptist responded when they reported back to him?
6. What is implied by the name, *Son of Man*? Of course, the question implies that He had a human parent. But, He is also God. Read Luke 1:31-32,35; 2:11. To the shepherds in the fields of Bethlehem, He was called “Christ the Lord.” But, to Mary in vision He was called the “Son of the most high God.”
7. Aren’t all human beings children of our heavenly Father? What is the difference between our relationship with God and that of Christ Jesus? The New Testament makes it clear that Jesus Christ is the second Person of the Godhead, our Creator and Redeemer. He maintained the closest possible relationship with His divine Father in heaven. Born of a woman, He was human. Born of a virgin, He was God.

Jesus says, “My Father which is in heaven,” as reminding His disciples that while by His humanity He is linked with them, a sharer in their trials, and sympathizing with them in their sufferings, by His divinity He is connected with the throne of the Infinite.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 442.3.

8. Why did God leave the joy, peace, and comfort of heaven to become a human being—especially a helpless baby Boy? He was born of a woman to prove His humanity.

9. Jesus's favorite title for Himself was *Son of Man*. That term appears more than eighty times in the Gospels. Twenty-five of those occurrences are in Luke. He is also called the Son of Man in Daniel 7:13, in Stephen's speech recorded in Acts 7:56, and in Revelation 1:13 and 14:14.
10. Jesus has identified Himself forever with the human race as noted in the *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Tuesday, April 14.

"The humanity of the Son of God is everything to us. It is the golden chain that binds our souls to Christ, and through Christ to God. This is to be our study. Christ was a real man; He gave proof of His humility in becoming a man. Yet He was God in the flesh."—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 244.

The use of "Son of man" in Luke provides various insights into the nature, mission, and destiny of the Incarnate Jesus.

First, the title identifies Him as a human (*Luke 7:34*), with no worldly address or security (*Luke 9:58*).

Second, Luke uses the title to assert Christ's divine nature and status: for the "'Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath'" (*Luke 6:5, NKJV*). Therefore, He is also the Creator, with the power to forgive sins (*Luke 5:24*).

Third, to accomplish this redemptive mission ordained by the Godhead before the foundations of the world (*Eph. 1:3-5*), the Son of man came to seek and save the lost (*Luke 9:56, 19:10*). But redemption itself cannot be completed until " 'the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected . . . and be killed, and be raised the third day' " (*Luke 9:22, NKJV*). This self-awareness of the Son of man about the path He had to tread, and the price He had to pay for the Redemption of humankind from sin, reveals not only the divine origin of the plan of Redemption but also Christ's submission in His humanity to that plan.

Fourth, note how complete a picture of the suffering Messiah that Luke portrays in the following passages: His foreknowledge of the Cross (*Luke 18:31-33*); His betrayal (*Luke 9:44*); His death as a fulfillment of prophecy (*Luke 22:22*); His Crucifixion and Resurrection (*Luke 24:7; compare with Luke 11:30*); and His role as the Mediator before the Father (*Luke 12:8*).

Fifth, Luke sees the Son of man in last-day terms as the One who returns to earth to reward His saints and to wrap up the great controversy (*Luke 9:26; 12:4; 17:24, 26, 30; 21:36; 22:69*).

In short, the title "Son of man" incorporates the multifaceted aspect not only of who Christ was but of what He came to do and what He has accomplished and will accomplish for us in the plan of salvation.

11. Read Luke 9:18-27. Compare Matthew 16:13-28 and Mark 8:27-9:1. Jesus had taken His disciples away from Judah and Galilee because the authorities there were looking for Him and wanted to arrest Him. They traveled together to Tyre and Sidon and then up to Caesarea Philippi, far from Judea and Galilee. At that time, Caesarea Philippi was full of pagan temples set up to honor all sorts of Roman, Greek, and other pagan gods. As the disciples looked upon those temples, they must have wondered what they were all about. It was a good opportunity for Jesus to question them about His own identity. So, what are we saying about Jesus and His identity by the lives we live in 2015?
12. Jesus had recently revealed His authority over nature (*Luke 8:22-25*), His power over demons (*Luke 8:26-35*), His might over diseases (*Luke 5:12-15; 8:43-48*), and His ability to feed about 20,000 people using only five tiny loaves and two fish (*Luke 9:13-17*). He had even demonstrated His power over death itself. (*Luke 8:51-56*) So, why did Jesus ask them who

they thought He was? What power do you think they thought He had?

Our knowledge of Jesus must never be at second hand. We might know every verdict ever passed on Jesus; we might know every Christology that human minds have ever thought out; we might be able to give a competent summary of the teaching about Jesus of every great thinker and theologian— and still not be Christians. Christianity never consists in knowing *about* Jesus; it always consists in *knowing Jesus*. Jesus Christ demands a personal verdict. He did not ask only Peter, he asks every one of us: “You—what do you think of me?”—William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew*, (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2009), vol. 2, p. 161.

13. Read all three accounts of the transfiguration as recorded in Luke 9:27-36; Matthew 17:1-9; and Mark 9:2-8. Compare Peter’s account in 2 Peter 1:16-18. Jesus had led three of His disciples—Peter, James, and John—up a difficult path to the top of a mountain. He knew what was coming in the near future, but they did not. He wanted to give them an assurance that He was in full harmony with His heavenly Father and that what was going to happen to Him was a part of God’s plan. At first, they all prayed together; but soon, the disciples fell asleep while Jesus continued praying. Suddenly, they were awakened by a bright light; and looking up, they saw Jesus transfigured by the brilliant light and beside Him were Moses and Elijah talking together with Him. Peter wanted to build three tents at the place to celebrate the occasion. But soon, the brilliant light engulfed them in a cloud, and they fell face down on the ground. When the cloud dispersed, all that was left was the human Jesus.

They believe that Elijah has come to announce the Messiah’s reign, and that the kingdom of Christ is about to be set up on the earth. . . The disciples are confident that Moses and Elijah have been sent to protect their Master, and to establish His authority as king.—Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages* 422.1.

14. Moses and Elijah had been chosen over any of the angels in heaven because they had suffered through various kinds of problems while living on this earth and could better provide solace and comfort to Jesus. What do we know about the death, burial, and resurrection of Moses? (Deuteronomy 34:5-12; Jude 9)
15. How are we to relate to the question of the humanity and the divinity of Jesus Christ?

Avoid every question in relation to the humanity of Christ which is liable to be misunderstood. Truth lies close to the track of presumption. In treating upon the humanity of Christ, you need to guard strenuously every assertion, lest your words be taken to mean more than they imply, and thus you lose or dim the clear perceptions of His humanity as combined with divinity. His birth was a miracle of God. . . . Never, in any way, leave the slightest impression upon human minds that a taint of, or inclination to, corruption rested upon Christ, or that He in any way yielded to corruption. He was tempted in all points like as man is tempted, yet He is called “that holy thing.” [Luke 1:35] It is a mystery that is left unexplained to mortals that Christ could be tempted in all points like as we are, and yet be without sin. The incarnation of Christ has ever been, and will ever remain, a mystery.—*Letter 8*, 1895. (Written to Brother and Sister [W.L.H.] Baker, North American workers in Australia, probably from Sunnyside, Cooranbong, N.S.W.) Ellen G. White comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, pp. 1128.5-1129.0; *13MR* 18.1-19.2. [Content in brackets is added.]

16. Does it really matter if we believe that Jesus was fully God? If Jesus was not God, then we do not have the answers about God that we need in the great controversy between God and Satan over God’s character and government. If Jesus was not fully human, He could not be a full and complete Example for us living here on this earth.

17. If someone asked you to prove from the Bible that Jesus was fully God, how would you respond? He arose from the dead by His Own divine power. (DA 785.2; Hebrews 2:14-15; John 8:12-58) Jesus destroyed the Devil, the father of lies, by revealing the truth in contrast to the Devil's lies. Ellen White was asked a similar question and she responded:

Was the human nature of the Son of Mary changed into the divine nature of the Son of God? No; the two natures were mysteriously blended in one person—the man Christ Jesus.—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1113.2; *UL* 260.2; *21Manuscript Releases* 418.5.

Jesus was in all things made like unto His brethren. He became flesh, even as we are. He was hungry and thirsty and weary. He was sustained by food and refreshed by sleep. He shared the lot of man; yet He was the blameless Son of God. He was God in the flesh. His character is to be ours.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 311.4.

18. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, a former president of India and a noted philosopher, is reported to have said that Christians are ordinary people making extraordinary claims. One such claim is the assertion that Christ is verily God and verily man.
19. What would have happened if Jesus had been a sinner when God's presence glorified Him on the mount of transfiguration? Would it not have consumed Him? What does that mean?
20. In writing his Gospel, Luke called Jesus "the Son of the Highest," "the Holy One," and "the Son of God." (Luke 1:31-35) Jesus is called the son of God because:

Christ . . . was one with the eternal Father—one in nature, in character, in purpose—the only being that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 34.1.

21. In Daniel 7 Jesus appears as the Majesty of Heaven but is called the Son of Man. In Luke 9:58, He said about Himself that He had nowhere to lay His head! What do these two contrasting comments teach us about Him? Why was the King of heaven laid in a manger?
22. In answer to our original question, God is waiting for completely honest and heart-searching answers to this question. Do you really believe that:

Christ was God essentially, and in the highest sense He was with God from all eternity, God over all, blessed forevermore. The Lord Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God, existed from eternity, a distinct person, yet one with the Father. He was the surpassing glory of heaven. He was the commander of the heavenly intelligences.—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, April 5, 1906 par. 6; *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 247.3-4; *FLB* 46.5; *LHU* 16.3-4; *5SDABC* 1126.4-5; *TMK* 11.4.

When we want a deep problem to study, let us fix our minds on the most marvelous thing that ever took place in earth or heaven—the incarnation of the Son of God. God gave His Son to die for sinful human beings a death of ignominy and shame. . . . He humbled Himself to suffer with the race, to be afflicted in all their afflictions.—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 904.6; *TMK* 25.2. Compare *DA* 83.4.

23. So, have you resolved these issues in your own mind? How has it affected your life and your relationship not only with God but also with your fellow human beings?

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