

Lesson 3

Jesus Christ



The Son of God became man to fulfill a mission: humanity's salvation and redemption. With the sin of Adam and Eve (*Original Sin*), there was a break in the relationship between God and humanity. The Son of God came to heal, restore, and elevate that relationship. Jesus Christ is the Son of God made flesh. Therefore, Jesus is truly God and truly man (*with the exception of sin*). This is why Jesus is the perfect mediator (*intercessor*) between God and man because both exist in him in perfect unity. The mystery of the Son of God becoming man while remaining divine is referred to as the Mystery of the Incarnation.

The Incarnation was able to take place because of Mary's "fiat," her 'yes' to God. The Annunciation to Mary is the mystery of our faith in which Mary accepts God's offer to be the Mother of our Lord through the message of the Archangel Gabriel. The Mystery of the Nativity of the Lord refers to the birth of Jesus Christ. These mysteries allowed Christ to enter into the world so he could fulfill the Father's mission of love. Through his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus reconciles humanity to God. It was for this reason that Jesus came to earth. In fact, the name Jesus means "God saves."

The life of Christ is recorded in the Gospels which are found in the New Testament in the Bible. Each of the four Gospels (*Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John*) present an account of the life of Christ. They help us to answer the all-important question, "Who is Jesus Christ?" Each evangelist (*Gospel writer*) looks at Jesus' life from a different perspective. Matthew focuses on Jesus as teacher; Mark looks at Jesus as the Messiah; Luke sees

Jesus as a doctor (*healer*); and John focuses on Jesus as the Word of God. Each Evangelist was inspired by the Holy Spirit to put into writing the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke are often referred to as the “Synoptic Gospels.” The word “synoptic” means “same or similar view.” There are many similarities in these three Gospels because they all share some of the same stories and teachings. John’s Gospel, on the other hand, assumes that the reader is familiar with the other Gospels, so his Gospel is comprised of material not found in the Synoptic Gospels.

The Ministry of Jesus

Jesus’ ministry begins immediately after his baptism in the Jordan by John the Baptist. At his baptism, Jesus’ identity is revealed. After his baptism, Jesus immediately goes into the desert for 40 days and 40 nights. It is here that Jesus battles Satan and overcomes temptation, thus showing us how to resist the devil and sin in our own lives.



After Jesus deals with Satan, he begins his public ministry of preaching, teaching, healing, and performing exorcisms. The main theme of his preaching is repentance and the Kingdom of God. Miracles play a major role in Jesus’ ministry. A miracle is mighty deed which can only be recognized as God’s action in the world. Jesus’ miracles are signs of the presence of God’s kingdom. All of Jesus’ miracles are physical manifestations and signs of his teaching; therefore, all of his miracles point to the Kingdom of God and demonstrate the Father’s love for creation.

Once Jesus begins his preaching, he recruits his disciples. Jesus selected 12 of his disciples to be apostles. The disciples were witnesses of Jesus’ miracles. Miracles are

an essential part of Jesus' ministry because they are outward signs of interior spiritual changes within a person, group, or community.

In the Gospel of John, miracles are called "signs." John uses the word "signs" instead of "miracles" because the works (*miracles*) of Jesus point to something beyond themselves. In other words, the miracles of Jesus point to his Divinity. For John, the miracles act like signs that put us on the path to the kingdom of heaven.

John's Gospel is divided into two parts. The first portion is called the "Book of Signs." It contains Jesus' ministry centered around seven signs (*miracles*). Each sign increases with meaning and complexity. The second part of John's Gospel is called the "Book of Glory." This portion of the Gospel focuses on the **Paschal Mystery** (*the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus*). The Book of Glory reveals the Divinity of Christ. John sees Christ as King and the Cross as his throne that brings Jesus glory, power, and might. The following list point out the Seven Signs found in John's Gospel.

Seven Signs of Jesus

Jesus Turns Water into Wine	John 2:1-11
Jesus Heals the Official's Son	John 4:43-54
Jesus Makes the Lame Walk	John 5:1-15
Jesus Feeds the Multitudes	John 6:1-15
Jesus Walks on Water	John 6:16-24
Jesus gives sight to the Blind	John 9:1-38
Jesus raises Lazarus from the Dead	John 11:1-44

The ministry of Jesus also includes his teachings. Jesus' teachings covered a vast array of topics and issues. He taught in various ways based upon his audience. Jesus often taught in parables. A parable is a brief story, which illustrates one or more instructive lesson or moral principle. A parable is an earthly story with spiritual truths. The word "parable" means "comparison, illustration, or analogy." In his parables, Jesus used simple stories and characters taken from everyday life to convey his message and important truths about God and His kingdom. There are many different levels and layers to parables. Jesus uses parables so we can deepen our understanding of the mysteries of our faith by reflecting upon them. The two most popular parables of Jesus are The Good Samaritan and The Prodigal Son.



The ministry of Jesus contained both miracles and parables. It also included prayer, teaching, and preaching. All of these various elements of his ministry were focused on the Love of God, the Coming of the Kingdom, and our Salvation and Redemption. In other words, the Cross of Christ was at the core of Our Lord's ministry. We are called to have a share in the Cross of Christ. Hence, we are called to participate in the Paschal Mystery (*the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus*).

Most Common Titles of Jesus

Jesus has many titles; however, we will look at seven of the more significant titles of Our Lord and what they mean with regards to the faith. Remember, Jesus' name is Sacred and Holy; it has great power. "Jesus" means "God saves" and "Christ" means "the Anointed One." So together in the name Jesus Christ, we see that "God saves the Anointed One."

1. Messiah

A title meaning "anointed one." Thus, Messiah is a synonym of the word "Christ." The Messiah was the long awaited savior who God would send for our redemption. The people in the time of Christ believed that the Messiah would bring them freedom from their earthly enemies, but they misunderstood the true meaning of the mission of the Messiah which was to bring spiritual freedom from Satan and sin.

2. Lord

This title means "master." The belief that Jesus is Lord signifies one's salvation since Christ is master of heaven and earth. It is a title that highlights the Divinity of God.

3. Logos (*the Word of God*)

This title reflects the Divinity of Jesus. As the Word of God, Jesus is seen as the Son of God who was ever-present to the Father and the Holy Spirit. John the Evangelist loves to use this title of Christ in his writings.

4. Son of God

This title is applied to Jesus in many cases in the New Testament. It is often used to refer to his Divinity. The declaration that Jesus is the Son of God is made by many individuals in the New Testament. On two separate occasions (*the Baptism of the Lord and the Transfiguration*), God the Father's voice is heard from Heaven declaring Jesus as His Son. Jesus also uses this title to refer to himself.

5. Son of Man

This title of Our Lord reflects his humanity. It highlights the fact that Jesus is the mediator between God and man. Jesus uses this title to describe himself especially with regards to his crucifixion. It is a title that focuses on Jesus as the "suffering servant."

6. Son of David

The title "Son of David" indicates Jesus' physical descent from King David. This title is important because it emphasizes the fulfillment of God's promise to His people that He will establish an everlasting kingdom from a descendant of David.

7. Lamb of God

The title "Lamb of God" only appears in the Gospel of John, with the exclamation of John the Baptist: "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" (*John 1:29*). This title is important with regards to the Eucharist. Lambs were used as sacrifices in the Old Testament. Jesus becomes the Lamb of Sacrifice in the New Testament and his sacrifice is done once for all time on the cross. At Mass, the priest uses the words of John the Baptist to identify the Eucharist as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." This title for Jesus emphasizes his willingness to give up his life for the salvation of the world. Jesus is the Lamb without blemish who delivers us through his sacrificial death to newness of life.

The "I AM" Statements of Jesus

Besides the use of different titles, Jesus tells us a lot about himself through the use of the seven "I AM" statements found in John's Gospel. These statements are important because they are ways in which Jesus reveals himself as the Son of God and at the same time reveals some of the attributes (*characteristics*) of God.

When God revealed Himself to Moses in the Burning Bush, He used the statement "I AM" to identify Himself. Therefore, when Jesus uses these expressions, he is revealing himself as the Second Person of the Trinity (*the Son of God*). The following chart gives us the seven "I AM" statements that Jesus uses in John's Gospel:

“I AM”

SAYINGS IN JOHN’S GOSPEL

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1

“THE BREAD OF LIFE”

“I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry ... I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” (6:35, 51)



2

“THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD”

“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. ... While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” (8:12; 9:5)



3

“THE GATE FOR THE SHEEP”

“Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. ... I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture.” (10:7, 9)



4

“THE GOOD SHEPHERD”

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ... I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me.” (10:11, 14)



5

“THE RESURRECTION & THE LIFE”

“I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die.” (11:25-26)



6

“THE WAY & THE TRUTH & THE LIFE”

“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.” (14:6-7)



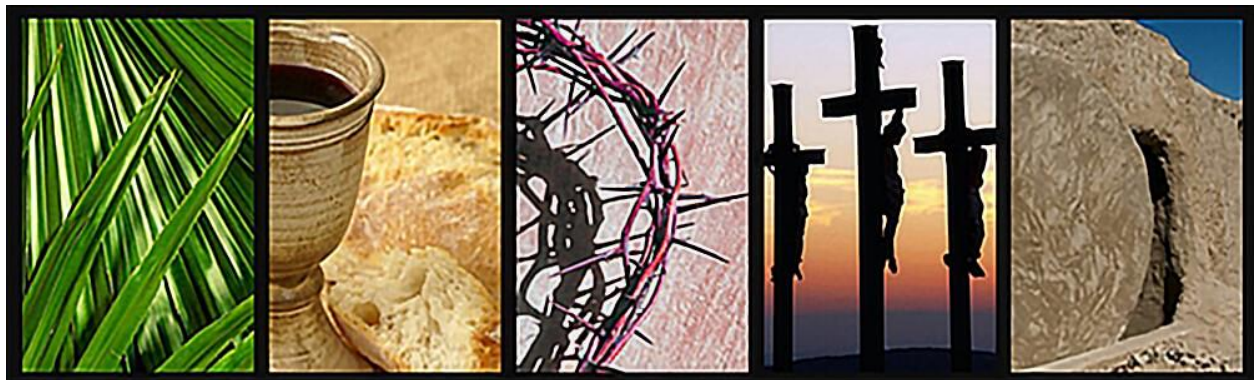
7

“THE TRUE VINE”

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ... I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” (15:1, 5)

The Paschal Mystery

The Paschal Mystery is the mystery of the Passion (*Suffering*), Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is the central mystery of our faith because it is what brings about the salvation and redemption of the whole human race. It is by Jesus' suffering and death on the cross that he shows us the great depths of God's love for us. The cross was an instrument of suffering and death, but through his sacrifice on it, Jesus made the cross a sign of life and God's love. We are called to embrace our cross so that we may have a share in the cross of Christ. By embracing the cross, we are able to be transformed to be more like Christ through our own sufferings, hardships, and sacrifices. The more we conform ourselves to Christ Crucified, the more we grow in holiness and love. The Paschal Mystery is at the core of Holy Week.



Holy Week Events

Palm Sunday:

Holy Week begins with the celebration of Palm Sunday, which is also referred to as "Passion Sunday" since one of the Passion narratives is read during the Mass. On Palm Sunday, we remember Jesus' triumphant entrance into Jerusalem. The crowds receive Jesus as their king and they lay down palm branches and shout, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the Highest."

Spy Wednesday:

It is on Spy Wednesday that Judas, one of the Lord's Twelve Apostles, makes the deal with the chief priests for 30 pieces of silver to betray Jesus.

Holy Thursday:

On Holy Thursday, the Church celebrates the Last Supper. It is during the Last Supper, that Jesus gives the Church the gift of the Eucharist and the Priesthood. Jesus' Last Supper was a Passover meal, the Jewish feast that celebrated God's deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt. Jesus washes the feet of his disciples during the Last Supper; however, the Gospel of John is the only one to record this action of our Lord. As Jesus celebrated Passover, he gave the feast a new meaning. Jesus stated that his death

would begin the New Covenant and he would give his life for the forgiveness of sins. Following the Last Supper meal, Jesus and his disciples, except Judas who went off to betray the Lord, go to the Mount of Olives to pray.

Good Friday:

Jesus has his trial before Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor. At first, Pilate refused to find Jesus guilty of anything. To appease Jesus' accusers, he sent our Lord to King Herod, the Jewish ruler of Galilee. Herod and his court questioned and mistreated Jesus and eventually sent him back to Pilate. The shouts of the crowds to crucify Jesus pressured Pilate into calling for his crucifixion after a scourging.

Jesus was led away and forced to carry his cross to the place of his execution. Along the way, a bystander named Simon of Cyrene was forced to help Jesus carry his cross. Jesus was crucified between two criminals. While he was dying on the cross, Jesus says seven things which are called "the Seven Last Words." The following chart contains the Seven Last Words and where they are located in the Gospels. Finally, Jesus dies and is taken down from the cross and placed in an empty tomb.



Easter Season



The Easter Season consists of 50 days; it begins with the celebration of the Resurrection of the Lord on Easter Sunday and ends with the celebration of Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles. The Resurrection is essential to our faith; it is only because Jesus rose from the dead that our hope in life after death is affirmed. The Risen Lord made several recorded visits to his disciples after he rose from the dead. The two most famous post-resurrection appearances of the Risen Lord are the Road to Emmaus and the story of Peter's Redemption.

On the 40th day after Easter Sunday, Jesus gave his disciples "the Great Commission" (*"Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you"* – Matthew 28:19-20) and then he Ascended into Heaven. For the next 9 days the Apostles gathered behind locked doors and prayed; this is the first novena of the Church. When the novena was over, on the 50th Day after Christ's Resurrection, the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles in the form of tongues of fire.

The Celebration of Pentecost closes the Easter Season. At Pentecost, we celebrate the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles and the Birthday of the Catholic Church. Hence, the Holy Spirit is the life breath of the Church.

