

# DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

## Lesson 11

### Christ, the Word of God

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As we study the Scriptures we discover that one of the names of Christ is the “Word of God.” This title is not only a name but an attribute, a function, an active identity. Understanding Jesus as the Word of God helps explain the inseparable relationship between the Scriptures and Jesus Christ. It also helps us understand the importance of the Word of God and why the Scriptures uphold and reverence the living Word to such a high degree. In this study we will investigate Christ the living Word and discover timeless truths and practical application from this doctrine for our lives today.

#### I. DEFINITION OF “THE WORD OF GOD”

- A. Philip Hughes: *“The manner in which we approach and handle the Bible should be determined by the example of Christ himself, for, as the Christians’ Lord and God, himself the Truth and the Light of the world, his example is absolutely authoritative for us. The attitude of him who is the incarnate Word to the testimony of the written Word is entirely clear. And in the issue concerning the inspiration of Scripture it is nothing less than the supreme and inerrant Lordship of Christ that is at stake.”*<sup>1</sup>
- B. *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*: *“In the NT a new mode of God’s presence is revealed. It is in Jesus Christ the incarnate Word that God is present among his own (Jn 1:14-18; 17:6, 26). Jesus’ mission was to reveal God to humanity. This he did through his whole life’s work as well as through his words. His revelation of the name of God was expressed in his own name – Jesus (“The Lord Is Salvation”). And in the person of Jesus the function of the name of God found fulfillment.”*<sup>2</sup>
- C. *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*: *“Thus in connection to the Old Testament picture of the word of God, the New Testament understands Jesus as the ultimate means through which God created, revealed and personified himself to creation.”*<sup>3</sup>
- D. Louis Berkhof: *“It was not the triune God but the second person of the Trinity that assumed human nature. For that reason it is better to say that the Word became flesh than that God became man. At the same time we should remember that each of the divine persons was active in the incarnation. This also means that the incarnation was not something that merely happened to the Logos, but was an active accomplishment on His part.”*<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Philip Edgecombe Hughes *Westminster Theological Journal*, Volume 23 (23:149 (1961; 2002)).

<sup>2</sup>W. A. Elwell, & P. W. Comfort, *Tyndale Bible dictionary*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers (2002) 1072.

<sup>3</sup> Walter A. Elwell, Gen. Ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, pg. 830.

<sup>4</sup>Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, pg. 333.

## II. THOUGHTS TO PONDER

- A. Francis Anderson: *“There is profound significance in the fact that in the Bible the term “the word of God” has two distinguishable but closely related meanings. It is commonly used for verbal messages purporting to come from God – prophetic oracle, the teaching of Jesus (Luke 5:1), apostolic preaching (Acts 6:2), holy writ as such (John 10:35). The title is also given to Jesus Christ himself (Rev 19:13), though rarely. But frequency does not matter; in the Bible the utterance of God is both personal and verbal, yet there are not two distinct modes or levels of utterance. Jesus the Person, as God’s Message, is disclosed by means of words which are a message about him. The written word points to the living Word because the incarnate Word declared himself by means of human speech, and we have absolutely no knowledge of him apart from the testimony of Scripture. There is no possible way of distinguishing one from the other.”*<sup>5</sup>
- B. *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*: *“The fourth Gospel recounts seven sign miracles of Jesus (2:1-11; 4:46-54; 5:1-9; 6:5-14; 6:19-21; 9:1-7; 11:1-44). As “signs” these miracles indicate the importance of what Jesus did in conjunction with understanding him as the pre-incarnate word of God. Jesus performed these miracles through his spoken word.”*<sup>6</sup>
- C. Herbert Lockyer: *“As the spoken word reveals our invisible thought, so Christ, as the Living Word, reveals the invisible God. “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him” (John 1:18).”*<sup>7</sup>
- D. *Zondervan Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia*: *“The climax of Biblical doctrine of the word of God, is that the Word is God Himself. Jesus Christ, God’s Son, is the eternal and incarnate Word. The Word is Jesus, and Jesus is the Word.”*<sup>8</sup>
- E. *Zondervan Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia*: *“With the term logos, however, is linked “truth” — “thy word is truth” (John 17:17). Elsewhere Jesus says, “I am the way, the truth and the life” (John 14:6). Since “things equal to the same thing are equal to each other,” the conclusion is clear — Jesus is the logos.”*<sup>9</sup>
- F. What is the difference between the incarnate Word of God and the written Word of God? What are the similarities? How can Christ be “The Word” and the Scriptures be “the Word?” How does the written Word relate to Christ the Word?

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<sup>5</sup> *Westminster Theological Journal*, Volume 22 (22:128 (1960; 2002)).

<sup>6</sup> Walter A. Elwell, Gen. Ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, pg. 829.

<sup>7</sup> Herbert Lockyer, *All the Divine Names and Titles in the Bible*, pg. 271.

<sup>8</sup> Merrill C. Tenney, Gen. Ed., *Zondervan Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 5, pg. 961.

<sup>9</sup> Merrill C. Tenney, Gen. Ed., *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 3, pg. 957.

- G. Irenaeus: *“For I have shown from the Scriptures, that no one of the sons of Adam is as to everything, and absolutely, called God, or named Lord. But that He is Himself in His own right, beyond all men who ever lived, God, and Lord, and King Eternal, and the Incarnate Word, proclaimed by all the prophets, the apostles, and by the Spirit Himself, may be seen by all who have attained to even a small portion of the truth. Now, the Scriptures would not have testified these things of Him, if, like others, He had been a mere man.”*<sup>10</sup>

### III. SCRIPTURAL PROOF FOR CHRIST, “THE WORD OF GOD”

- A. **Jn. 1:1-3, 14** 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. . . 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.
- B. **“In the beginning was the Word. . .”** Christ did not exist *“from the beginning”* but existed *“in the beginning.”*
1. **Mic. 5:2** But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Too little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity.
  2. **Jn. 8:57-58** So the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?” 58 Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.”
  3. **Jn. 17:5** Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.
  4. **Jn. 17:24** “Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.
  5. **I Pet. 1:20-21** For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you 21 who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

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<sup>10</sup>A. Roberts, J. Donaldson, & A. C. Coxe, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* Vol.I: ECF 1.1.7.1.3.20. Translations of the writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325. The apostolic fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus. (1997) (449). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems.

- C. **“ . . . and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.”** We see in the Scriptures Christ the Word working and the Word being exalted just as Christ is exalted.
1. **Gen. 1:1, 3, 6, 9, 14, 20, 24, 26,** In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. . . “Then God said, . . .”
  2. **Psa. 138:2** I will bow down toward Your holy temple And give thanks to Your name for Your lovingkindness and Your truth; For You have magnified Your word according to all Your name.
  3. **Jn. 12:48** “He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.<sup>11</sup>
- D. **“All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.”** Christ, existing as the Word of God, spoke the heavens and earth into existence.
1. **Ex. 20:11** “For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.
  2. **Psa. 33:6-9** By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, And by the breath of His mouth all their host. 7 He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap; He lays up the deeps in storehouses. 8 Let all the earth fear the Lord; Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. 9 For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.
  3. **Col. 1:16** For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.
  4. **Heb. 1:1-3** God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, 2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. 3 And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. . .

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<sup>11</sup>The Scriptures make it clear that Jesus is the judge (Acts. 10:40-43; 17:30-31; Jn. 5:21-24; II Tim. 4:1-2; etc.) Yet Jesus says they will be judged by Jesus’ words showing that the Word of God, the words of Christ, and Christ himself are inseparable in authority and often are used interchangeably. To reject the Word of God is to reject Christ himself.

- E. **“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.”** Christ is the Living Word or revelation of God to man.
1. **Jn. 1:14, 18** 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. . . 18 No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.
  2. **Jn. 14:8-11** Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” 9 Jesus said to him, “Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? 10 “Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. 11 “Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves.
  3. **Jn. 17:26** and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”
  4. **Isa. 55:10-11** “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, And do not return there without watering the earth And making it bear and sprout, And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; 11 So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.
  5. **Mt. 5:18** “For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.
  6. **Mt. 24:35** “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.
  7. **Lk. 24:44** Now He said to them, “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”
  8. **I Jn. 1:1-3** What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life— 2 and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us— 3 what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

9. **Rev. 19:11-16 cf. Heb. 4:12**

<b>Rev. 19:11-16</b>	<b>Heb. 4:12</b>
<p>And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. 12 His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. 13 He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. 15 From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. 16 And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."</p>	<p>12 For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.</p>

IV. **ERRORS CONCERNING CHRIST, "THE WORD OF GOD"**

- A. Jesus is not the Word of God but represents the Word of God.
- B. Jesus is in every way synonymous with the Scriptures.
- C. Jesus became the Word of God.
- D. Disobedience to the Word of God is not disobedience to Jesus Christ.
- E. Jesus is eternal but the Word of God is not.
- F. We need to respect Jesus Christ but not the Word of God.
- G. We can deny the inspiration, authority and infallibility of Scripture and still honor Jesus Christ.
- H. We can deny parts of the Bible, like the creation account, the story of Jonah, or the miracles in the Bible and still honor Jesus Christ.
- I. We don't need to work hard at interpreting the Scriptures accurately because all we are after is ideas in the Scriptures and these ideas mean something different to everyone.

V. **APPLICATION OF CHRIST, “THE WORD OF GOD”**

- A. Christ is the Word which keeps us from sin. **Psa. 119:9-11**
- B. Christ, the Word, is the wisdom for living to the glory of God. **Col. 2:2-3; 3:16**
- C. To know the Word of God is to know Christ.
- D. God’s Word cannot err because Christ, who is God, cannot err.
- E. God’s Word can be trusted because Christ, who is the Word, can be trusted.
- F. God’s Word is eternal because Christ is eternal.
- G. If we fail to submit to and obey the Word of God, we fail to submit to and obey Jesus Christ.
- H. We can’t show love to Christ except by obeying the Word of God.

We should consider the word to be as a mirror into which Christ looks down from heaven; and then we, looking into it, see his face reflected as in a glass—darkly, it is true, but still in such a way as to be a blessed preparation for seeing him as we shall see him face to face. This volume contains Jesus Christ’s letters to us, perfumed by his love. These pages are the garments of our King, and they all smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia. Scripture is the royal chariot in which Jesus rides, and it is paved with love for the daughters of Jerusalem. The Scriptures are the swaddling bands of the holy child Jesus; unroll them and you find your Saviour. The quintessence of the word of God is Christ.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Charles Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening*, evening June 10, Logos Bible Software.