Session 1

Son of God/ Son of Man

John 20:30-31; Daniel 7:13-14; Philippians 2:6-11

Memory Verse

But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

– John 20:31, CSB

Son of God/Son of Man

THEOLOGICAL THEME: In the incarnation, Jesus was both fully God and fully human.

CALL TO ACTION: Where do you need to trust that Jesus knows your struggles?

The origins of the Apostles' Creed are, interestingly, a mystery.

Here's what we do know about the creed: It wasn't written by the apostles themselves (you won't find it in the Bible), though it affirms what they believed and taught. Its origins can be traced back to the "Old Roman Creed" in the second century, and historians believe new believers used this as a statement of faith at their baptism.

We may not know exactly where the Apostles' Creed began, but we can certainly understand its usefulness for the church. It's a summary of what we believe as Christians. Many Christian traditions recite it weekly because the truths it contains are important and foundational.

Central to those foundational beliefs is the incarnated Christ. Today, we're kicking off the Advent season by exploring the statements the Apostles' Creed proclaims about Jesus and why these truths are vital to our faith.[1]

Why is it valuable to recite this creed regularly as a body of believers?

What parts of the creed stand out most to you? Why?

The Apostle's Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
The third day he arose again from the dead.
He ascended to heaven
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

Session Summary

Jesus is God's Son. In the incarnation, when Jesus "became human and made his home among us" (John 1:14 NLT), Jesus came to earth, simultaneously fully God and fully man, and He remains so today. This truth boggles the human mind, but it's foundational to our faith as Christians.

Jesus lived through the full human experience—birth, growth, joy, pain, grief, betrayal, love, and more. He can relate and empathize with the things we go through daily.

1. Son of God (John 20:30-31)

When you hear Jesus described as the "Son of God," what comes to mind? How would you explain this truth to someone who is not a Christian?

What other truths about Jesus did John outline in this passage, and why are they important?

Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Many of us learned this truth in church when we were young. But for many Jews living during Jesus's earthly ministry, this was hard to accept.

Between the time the Old Testament ended with the writings of the prophet Malachi and the New Testament picked up with the birth of Jesus, Alexander the Great had swept into town, bringing Greek culture (known as Hellenism) with him.[2] The norms and beliefs accepted and practiced in Greek culture went against God's standards for His people. And God's people, only about one hundred years out of the exile, responded with an intense focus on following Jewish law very closely, even going so far as to add extra laws in an attempt to protect their people and ensure faithfulness. This approach led to the religious leaders' becoming what Jesus called "whitewashed tombs" (Matthew 23:27-28).

For many of these watchmen on the wall of the faith, Jesus appeared heretical. Jesus presenting Himself with authority as the Son of God was scandalous—incendiary, even. The religious leaders could quote the first five books of the Bible (the Torah), but their hearts were too hard to see that the Messiah promised throughout the Old Testament Scriptures had come in their lifetime.

Jesus isn't only the Son of God; He is also fully God, a member of the Trinity (one God in three persons: God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit). This wondrous reality has always been true and will always be true (though it's difficult for our minds to grasp).

John wrote of this truth in multiple places, including our passage today:

> *But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*
> —John 20:31

In fact, John opened his Gospel account with a proclamation of Christ's divinity:

> *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. All things were created through him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. That light shines in the darkness, and yet the darkness did not overcome it.*
> —John 1:1-5

The author of Hebrews also spoke to this truth:

> *In these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son. God has appointed him heir of all things and made the universe through him. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact expression of his nature, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.*
> —Hebrews 1:2-3

In light of His deity, how does Jesus's birth display the humility with which He came to earth?

In the Advent season, we marvel at the fact that Jesus, the Son of God, came to earth to save us by being born to a virgin in a stable in a small town in the Roman Empire. How wondrous!

2. Son of Man (Daniel 7:13-14)

When you hear "Son of Man," what do you think of? How would you explain this to someone who is not a Christian?

Why is it important that Jesus is fully man and not only fully God?

In this passage, Daniel had a glimpse of the heavenly throne room. There, he saw the "Ancient of Days" on the throne (God the Father, v. 9) and, later, "one like a son of man" (v. 13) approaching Him. The "son of man" here is none other than Jesus Christ.

Daniel saw Jesus "coming with the clouds of heaven" (v. 13). Clouds were often associated with divinity in the Old Testament. God guided His people out of Egypt in a "pillar of cloud" in Exodus 13:21. When Moses brought the people to meet God at Mount Sinai, the mountain was covered with a "thick cloud" (Exodus 19:16). God appeared in a cloud above the mercy seat in the holy place in the tabernacle (Leviticus 16:2).

In the heavenly scene in Daniel 7, we see that Jesus is given dominion, glory, and an everlasting kingdom (we just studied about Jesus's everlasting kingdom in our Revelation series). And Jesus used this messianic title, Son of Man, in His ministry:

> *Jesus told him, "Foxes have dens, and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."* —Matthew 8:20

> *But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—then he told the paralytic, "Get up, take your stretcher, and go home."* —Matthew 9:6

> *"I am," said Jesus, "and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming with the clouds of heaven."* —Mark 14:62

Son of Man is an important messianic title that highlights Jesus's humanity. Consider the reality that Jesus became a human like us. He got tired and needed to sleep. He built friendships, and he was hurt by some of his closest friends. He knew joy. He experienced deep grief. He lived the whole human experience (but without sin). He was fully human, so He can relate to the things we go through.

> *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin.* —Hebrews 4:15

How do you respond when you hear that Jesus can relate to the struggles you face daily? What might make this difficult to believe?

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3. Fully God and Fully Man (Philippians 2:6-11)

What does this passage outline about both Jesus's divinity and His humanity?

What does this passage reveal about Jesus's character?

Jesus was fully God and fully human at the same time.

It's hard to wrap our heads around this idea, but both things are true, and this understanding of Jesus is essential to our faith. The theological term for this idea is the hypostatic union. We don't see this term used in Scripture, but we see its truth in this passage from the apostle Paul, who wrote some of the most important Christology (the theological study of Christ) in the New Testament.

In our passage, Paul describes Jesus as both fully God and fully human. Even though He was God, Jesus "gave up his divine privileges" (v. 7, NLT) and took on the humble life of a human being! And He was obedient to God even to the point of death, dying like a criminal on the cross, though He was sinless and innocent. As a result, Jesus has "the name that is above every name" (v. 9), and before Him, every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that He is Lord.

Paul wrote this truth in his letter to the Colossian church as well:

> *For the entire fullness of God's nature dwells bodily in Christ . . .* —Colossians 2:9

And John wrote of this truth in the introduction to his Gospel:

> *The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed his glory, the glory as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*
> —John 1:14

During the Advent season, we reflect on the wonder of this truth with great awe.

How challenging do you find it to hold the truth of Jesus being both fully God and fully man? Why is it important that we hold to this truth, even if it's difficult to comprehend?

Conclusion

Jesus is the Son of God and the Son of Man. In the Advent season, we marvel at these truths.

Jesus was born as a baby. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14a). His birth was extremely humble. He was also fully God. He deserved glory, praise, and honor, but He came with no fanfare or exaltation, born in a stable. He wasn't proud or selfish; He was gentle, lowly, and humble. He experienced life as a human does. Through His life and ministry, Jesus gave us the perfect model to follow as His disciples. As Paul wrote, He "gave up his divine privileges" (Philippians 2:7, NLT) and took the hard road out of great and undeserved love for us.

What can we learn about God and His character from our study today?

The author of Hebrews noted that Jesus is able to empathize with us in our human experience (4:15, NIV). How does this affect the way we approach the Lord in times of trouble or when we mess up?

How should this impact the way we approach the Advent season? What about the way we share Jesus with others?

Memorize

But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.
- John 20:31, CSB

References

[1]desiringgod.org/articles/we-believe

[2]gotquestions.org/Hellenism.html

[3]David S. Dockery, ed., Holman Concise Bible Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2011)

[4]Edwin Blum and Trevin Wax, eds., CSB Study Bible Notes (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).