

Redeemer OPC, Hawaii
Adult Sunday School
The Person and Atoning Work of Christ (4)
“The States of Christ”

- I. Introduction. Before we delve any further into this study, I want to give credit where credit is due, which I should have done from the beginning. In this study, I am relying heavily on a few sources, as well as confirming with my own study and many, many other sources which I have read over the years. But among the sources I am relying heavily on are R. C. Sproul’s series on theology and Louis Berkhof’s Systematic Theology. I would add that Charles Hodge, R. L. Dabney, and others have contributed somewhat with their systematic theologies, too. But with that said, back to our study. When you speak to someone in one of the cults about Jesus Christ, and you will encounter all kinds of bad, unbiblical, heretical theology and doctrine concerning the Person of Jesus Christ. One aspect of the Bible’s teaching that appears to have confused them, and that they have further confused and twisted, is the effect of the birth of His human nature into the world. At least, that is the point that acts as a catalyst for their development of their very dangerous doctrine and heretical doctrine. Add to it, then, that they are also confused about exactly what Christ was chronologically prior to His birth; i.e., during the OT age, and what He is now that He has ascended into heaven in glory. Sadly, too many Christians are somewhat confused about all of this, too, because of the negligence of some parts of the broader church to teach sound doctrine. What we study today should help us understand this more clearly in order to avoid the pitfalls that others have not. So, let’s consider The States of Christ.
- II. The Pre-Incarnate State of Christ. As we have seen in the previous study, the divine nature of Christ is eternal; He is God, the Son, the Second Person of the Trinity, eternally generated of the Father. John 1:1 confirms that, and we have examined that in some detail. So we may easily infer from this that before He took to Himself a fully human nature by being conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit, He existed with His divine nature alone. From this, we must draw several implications.
- A. Christ Neither Was Nor Is Lucifer’s Brother. Lucifer is an angel, a created being, who fell into sin and wickedness in his rebellion against God. Christ was and is God, not an angel, not a created being. So, He is not a previously produced “spirit-baby” who was born in order to make a journey down into a

fallen state in order to work His way back up again as an example of how we are supposed to do likewise. (Mormon teaching.)

- B. Christ Neither Was Nor Is the Archangel Michael. Contrary to early 7th Day Adventist teaching.
- C. Christ Was Not Absent from His People. One misconception, among others, of the Jehovah's Witnesses is that God is one God and one Person, Jehovah. In the OT, they only see Jehovah as the God who was there. In many OT texts, the tetragrammaton, YHWH, refers to the Father. But for one thing, they fail to realize that the Bible identifies Jesus Christ as Jehovah in more than one way and place. E.g., the I AM statements of Jesus are one way that He identifies Himself as the same God who spoke to Moses at the burning bush, as we have seen in past lessons. But consider, too, that the apostle John, in John 12:41, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, identifies Christ as the One whom Isaiah saw sitting on the throne of God in Isa. 6:1-5. And Isaiah called Him YHWH. In the OT itself, there are many places where Christ appears to His people in a pre-incarnate appearance. E.g., *the Angel of the Lord*, an OT technical term for the Christ, was said to be in the pillar of smoke by day and fire by night, while God also says that He is that One who was leading His people. The Angel of the Lord also visited Samson's parents before he was born. But consider this: no one could see the face of God and live. So Moses, when he asked to see God's glory, was hidden in the cleft of the rock while the glory of God passed by, so that he would not die. (What a type of Christ that cleft of the rock was!—He in whom we are hidden so that we may live and not die in the presence of the holy and glorious God.) Yet, Moses spoke with God face to face in the tabernacle. It therefore had to be the pre-incarnate Son of God as the Savior with whom Moses met, the same One who kept him, the sinner, from the wrath of God when the glory of God passed by. I believe that most of the encounters with God that His OT people had were with the pre-incarnate Christ. Next,...

III. The State of Christ's Life on Earth. The Apostles' Creed summarizes the steps of His life on earth: birth (and thus the life He lived afterward), death, resurrection, ascension, session, return. There are two very distinct estates into which those must be divided. The first is...

- A. His Humiliation. At birth, He entered into the estate of humiliation which deepens throughout His life to the death of the cross. We find this reflected in the well-known passage in Phil. 2:5-8, "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who although He existed in the form of God did

not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, being made in the likeness of men (fully human, yet without sin).” There is His Incarnation, His first stoop into the estate of humiliation by leaving His status and reign in heaven behind—that was His emptying Himself. It goes on, “And being found in appearance as a man (a true Substitute), He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” There is His further stoop into the estate of humiliation by placing Himself under God’s law to fulfill the perfect obedience it required of us, and then bearing its penalty though He did not deserve one bit of it. He subjected Himself even to the most ignominious form of punishment and to death itself in an act of self-sacrifice as He regarded others as more important than Himself, even though He was the Lord of glory. There were elements of glory that attended Him even in humiliation: the angels outside of Jerusalem at His birth; the magi worshiped Him; the Father’s testimony and the Spirit’s anointing at His baptism; the Mount of Transfiguration; the apostles’ acknowledgment in Jn. 1:14, “and we beheld His glory.” Even so, that period of His life, marked by poverty, hatred, persecution, and death, was still in the estate of humiliation. The second estate is...

- B. His Exaltation. The same body that died and was buried was raised from the dead in exaltation. Though it was the same body, it was changed into a glorified state. In 1 Cor. 15, He is called the first fruits of the resurrection from the dead. His resurrection provided the grounds for His people to be raised (if He had not been raised, we surely would have no right to resurrection or exaltation in ourselves), and the power, and the pattern. As the first-fruits He also foreshadows our glorified state at the resurrection. We are sown in dishonor, the dishonor of death as the result of the curse on account of man’s sin; we are raised in honor, honor we do not deserve, conformed to His glorious body (Phil. 3:21). We continue to examine His estate of exaltation as we now look to...

IV. The State of Christ in Glory. We can speak of it both before and after His second advent.

- A. Currently, before His Second Advent. The next step in Christ’s exaltation was His ascension into heaven. His ascension showed His glory in the visible form it took of His being lifted up and received into a cloud. It wasn’t a weather cloud; it was a cloud of glory, like the one with which God filled the tabernacle when the first sacrifice was offered on the altar of burnt offering. His glory is shown to be more intense than we can imagine by the word picture of Rev. 1:12-17. Christ’s ascension was a once-

for-all event. He who ascended is also He who descended. His ascension is therefore unique even though all of His people will also ascend into heaven. His ascension was an ascension to a throne—the throne—to be elevated and crowned King of kings and Lord of lords as the risen Mediator. He was thus elevated to His session at the right hand of God, His being seated, as a court is considered to be “in session” when the judge is seated at his bench. The King is in His court, carrying out God’s plan by His providence and power (Isa. 53:10, “the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand” as the reward for His sacrifice; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3), ruling and reigning as Head of all things to the church. He was elevated to His high priesthood, ever living to make intercession for us eternally. From there He will return to judge the living and the dead, and take His resurrected people into eternal glory in the new heavens and the new earth.

- B. After His Second Advent. (READ Rev. 21:1-8.) Christ’s glory will be shown to His people in intimate proximity to Him who pours out mercy upon us. Christ’s glory will also be shown in His oversight and administration of strict justice in the pouring out of God’s wrath upon the wicked in hell for eternity. (READ Rev. 22:1-5.) The glory of Christ is shown to His people even in that He will be their light; there will be no night in eternity, nothing to hide wickedness, for there will be no wickedness, and everything we think, say, and do will be in utter transparency, and will pass the test. Christ has already ensured it by His humiliation and exaltation. And we will be in the comforting presence of His glory forever.