

Title: "OIC Statement of Faith, Part 3: We believe in Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God"

Key verse: 1st Timothy 2:5 (NASB) – "For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus."

Good morning, everyone. It is good to see you all again. Three months ago, I started a series of messages on the Statement of Faith of Osaka International Church. After taking a break during the summer, I am returning to this series and I plan to do one message per month on this topic during the coming months. I think it's important to remind ourselves of the fundamental doctrines on which the Christian faith rests, and that is why I am doing this series.

In my first message, I covered Paragraph 1 of our Statement of Faith, where we declare our belief that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant Word of God. Paragraph 2 states that we believe in one God, who is the creator of all things, and that He exists in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (the Trinity). Today, I will cover Paragraph 3. I have put that paragraph up on the screen – let's read it:

We believe that Jesus Christ is true God and true man, having been conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He died on the cross a perfect and complete sacrifice for our sins according to the Scriptures. Further, He rose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven, where at the right hand of the majesty on high, He is now our High Priest and Advocate. Luke 1:34-35, 1 Timothy 2:5, Hebrews 8:1-2.

There are several points here that I would like to highlight ... and then expand upon during my sermon today.

First, Jesus Christ is both God and man – true God and true man.

Second, He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. His father is God, not a human man. In this way, with a divine father and a human mother, Jesus could be both human and divine.

Third, He died on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins – a perfect and complete sacrifice.

Fourth, fifth, and sixth: He rose from the dead, He ascended into heaven, and He is now seated at the right hand of God the Father.

Seventh, He is our High Priest and Advocate. As a high priest, He mediates between us and God. As an advocate, He defends us like a lawyer in a courtroom.

Our Statement of Faith cites three passages of Scripture in support of these statements. First, let's read 1st Timothy 2:5 (NASB) – "For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus."

Next, let's read Hebrews 8:1-2 (NASB) which describes Jesus our Lord – "Now the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, ² a minister in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord set up, not man."

Third, we will look at the Gospel of Luke, chapter one. Our Statement of Faith cites just verses 34 and 35, but I would like to read the wider context: verses 26-35. It is with this passage in Luke that I will begin today's lesson on Jesus Christ, looking today at His birth, His work, and His divinity.

Let's read Luke 1:26-35 (NASB) – "Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And coming in, he said to her, 'Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.' ²⁹ But she was very perplexed at this statement, and

was pondering what kind of greeting this was.³⁰ And the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.’³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and give birth to a son, and you shall name Him Jesus.³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David;³³ and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.’³⁴ But Mary said to the angel, ‘How will this be, since I am a virgin?’³⁵ The angel answered and said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; for that reason also the holy Child will be called the Son of God.’”

Part 1: The Virgin Birth and the Incarnation of Christ

Here we have the story of the incarnation of the Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity. “Incarnation” — this means God taking on human flesh. As I said a moment ago, Jesus Christ has God as His father and Mary as His mother, so that He will be both divine and human. The doctrine of the virgin birth is an essential doctrine of the Christian faith.

When Matthew tells the story of Jesus’ birth, this is what he writes in his conclusion, in Matthew 1:22-23 (NASB) – “Now all this took place so that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet would be fulfilled:²³ ‘Behold, the virgin will conceive and give birth to a Son, and they shall name Him Immanuel,’ which translated means, ‘God with us’.”

The prophet that Matthew quoted was Isaiah. Let’s read that prophesy in Isaiah 7:14 (NASB) – “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and she will name Him Immanuel.”

This was a special sign: it is quite unique that a virgin would conceive and bear a child. Some critics of the doctrine of the virgin birth of Christ point out that the original Hebrew word here in Isaiah does not necessarily mean “virgin.” It is the Hebrew word *‘almah*, which simply means *young woman*. Yes, that is what it means, but in the culture of that day, you would expect young women to be virgins. And when the Old Testament was translated into Greek shortly before the time of Christ, the translators used the Greek word *parthenos* to translate this word *‘almah*, and *parthenos* has the narrow meaning of *virgin*. The Greek translators understood what Isaiah meant by his usage of this word: he meant a virgin. Critics who wish to dismiss the notion of the virgin birth by saying the word *‘almah* simply means young woman completely miss the point of the prophesy. When the second century Christian writer Justin Martyr defended this doctrine, he pointed out that this was a special sign being given, and what made it special was the uniqueness that a virgin conceives and gives birth. Without this unique feature, there would be no reason to regard this sign as something remarkable. What makes it remarkable is that a virgin conceives.

And in Christian theology, the significance of having been conceived by the Holy Spirit means Jesus is of divine origin and is without sin. Indeed, Luke 1:35 says “The angel answered and said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; for that reason also the holy Child will be called the Son of God’.” Jesus is referred to as “the *holy* Child.”

1 John 3:5 (NASB) – “ You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin.”

Hebrews 4:15 (NASB) – “For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things just as we are, yet without sin.”

Jesus is without sin. And not only that, but because He experienced life as a human being, He can sympathize with us in our human condition, including in our struggle against sin.

Hebrews 7:26-28 (NASB) – “For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens; ²⁷ who has no daily need, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because He did this once for all time when He offered up Himself. ²⁸ For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, appoints a Son, who has been made perfect forever.”

Verse 26 says that Christ was a holy and blameless high priest. Verse 27 says He offered Himself as the sacrifice for our sins. This is what it means for Him to be a high priest on our behalf.

Part 2: The Person and Work of Christ

I have mentioned to you before about this great resource I have: the ESV Study Bible. Pastor Alistair considered this the best study Bible available today, and I would agree with that. Not only does it have detailed commentary on each passage of the Bible, but at the end of the book there are many theological essays that are written in a very concise and easy-to-understand manner. There are two essays in this study Bible that I would like to share with you today. These are the essays entitled “The Person of Christ” and “The Work of Christ.” Let me quote for you the opening lines of the first essay:

“Four statements must be understood and affirmed in order to attain a complete biblical picture of the person of Jesus Christ:

1. Jesus Christ is fully and completely *divine*.
2. Jesus Christ is fully and completely *human*.
3. The divine and human natures of Christ are *distinct*.
4. The divine and human natures of Christ are completely *united* in one person.

Many passages of Scripture demonstrate that Jesus is fully and completely God:

John 1:1 (ESV) – “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

John 20:28 (ESV) – “Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God!’”

Romans 9:5 (ESV) – “To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.”

Philippians 2:5-7 (ESV) – “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be held on to for advantage, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.”

Titus 2:13 (ESV) – “Waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.”

Hebrews 1:3a (ESV) – “He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power...”

2nd Peter 1:1 (ESV) – “Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.”

(Excerpt From: *Crossway*. “ESV® Study Bible.”)

“Even though the passages cited above clearly teach the deity of Christ, this truth is often challenged. Some say that Jesus never claimed to be God ... However, Jesus’ understanding of his own deity in the Gospels does not support this perspective. He clearly saw himself as God. This can be seen primarily in six ways.

1. Jesus taught with *divine authority*. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, “the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was *teaching them as one who had authority*, and not as their scribes” (Matt. 7:28–29)...

2. Jesus had *a unique relationship with God the Father*. When he was a young boy, Jesus sat with the religious leaders in the temple, amazing people with the answers he gave ... (Luke 2:49). Jesus’ reference to God as “my Father” is a radical statement of a unique, intimate relationship with God, of which he was already fully conscious. Such a reference by an individual was unprecedented in Jewish literature. ...

3. Jesus’ favorite self-designation was the title *Son of Man*. The phrase “a son of man” could mean merely “a human being.” But Jesus refers to himself as *the Son of Man* (implying the unique, well-known Son of Man), which indicates that he sees himself as the Messianic Son of Man in Daniel 7 who is to rule over the whole world for all eternity ...

4. Jesus’ teaching emphasized *his own identity*. Jesus came teaching the kingdom of God, and in it he was the King. ...

5. Jesus *received worship*. Perhaps the most radical demonstration of Jesus’ belief that he was God is the fact that when he was worshiped, as he sometimes was, he accepted that worship (Matt. 14:33; 28:9, 17; John 9:38; 20:28). ...

6. Jesus *equated himself with the Father*, and as a result the Jewish leaders accused him of blasphemy ...”

(Excerpt From: Crossway. “ESV® Study Bible.”)

I find this last point especially interesting. Critics want to say that Jesus didn’t claim to be divine. But the religious leaders of His day knew exactly the implications of His statements. Let’s read a few of these.

John 5:17-18 (ESV) – “But Jesus answered them, ‘My Father is working until now, and I am working.’”¹⁸ This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.”

John 8:58 (ESV) – “Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am’.” When Jesus said “I am,” He was making a reference to Exodus 3:14 when God revealed His name to Moses saying “I am that I am. Tell them that ‘I am’ has sent you.” The people understood what Jesus was implying, so verse 59 says they picked up stones to throw at Him.

John 10:30-33 (ESV) – “‘I and the Father are one.’”³¹ The Jews picked up stones again to stone him.³² Jesus answered them, ‘I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?’³³ The Jews answered him, ‘It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God’.”

Well, I think I have shared enough information with you to show that the divinity of Jesus Christ is clearly taught in the Scripture. Let us move on to the next part of today’s message.

Part 3: Jesus Christ, the Perfect Sacrifice for our Sins.

This is the main work of Christ on our behalf: to pay the penalty for our sin and put us back in a right relationship with our creator. We call this the work of Atonement on our behalf.

Atonement. Look closely at that word. “AT” ... “ONE” ... -ment. To be made “at one” with each other. When two former enemies make peace with one another, they can now be “at one.” This is the essence of atonement.

Let's read what my ESV Study Bible has to say on this:

“The atonement is central to God’s work in the history of salvation (1 Cor. 15:4). Atonement is the making of enemies into friends by averting the punishment that their sin would otherwise incur. ...The crux of the atonement is Christ taking the place of sinners and enduring the wrath of God as their substitute sacrifice. This is evident in passages like 2 Corinthians 5:21... and Isaiah 53:4–5. ...” *(Excerpt From: Crossway. “ESV® Study Bible.”)*

Let's look at 2nd Corinthians 5:21 (ESV) – “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

And in the famous Old Testament prophesy of the Suffering Servant, we read this in Isaiah 53:4-5 (ESV) – “Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.”

Believers have been set free from sin and experience the power of God. Ephesians 2:5-6 says we are risen with Christ and seated with Him in the presence of our heavenly Father. In this way He completes our atonement, and we thank God for this wonderful blessing made possible through Jesus Christ, who is both God and man.

Part 4: Jesus Christ is Resurrected, Ascended, and Seated at God’s Right Hand

I have shared with you before some messages on Christ’s resurrection and ascension into heaven. His resurrection proves that He defeated death and sin and that He has triumphed over the grave. Let us read a summary of the fundamentals of the Christian gospel from the Apostle Paul:

1st Corinthians 15:3-8 (ESV) – “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas [Peter], then to the twelve. ⁶ Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸ Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.”

Christ was resurrected and seen by hundreds of people. During my college years, when I was struggling with the question of whether to believe the Christian gospel or not, it was the changed lives of these men who had witnessed the resurrection that convinced me of the truthfulness of this message. What they saw had such impact on them that it changed their lives. They became evangelists for this gospel message, and many of them became martyrs for it. The Holy Spirit energized their ministry and the message has spread all over the world and impacted countless people and many societies. This is what gave me the confidence that there was reality in this story and that I, too, could put my trust in this message.

In Acts chapter 1, Luke tells us that Jesus spent 40 days with His disciples. And then He ascended into heaven. Let's read Acts 1:9-11 (NASB) – “And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were watching, and a cloud took Him up, out of their sight. ¹⁰ And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, then behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them, ¹¹ and they said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven’.”

Jesus is now in heaven, with His glorified human body, sitting at the right hand of God the Father. Let's read Hebrews 1:3 (ESV) – "He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."

I would like to close today's sermon by reciting the Apostles' Creed. This is a nice, concise statement of some of the essential doctrines of the Christian faith.

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of 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. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again 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.