



10

Jesus Obeys

Key Theme

- Jesus is God in the flesh.

Key Passages

- Luke 2:39–52; John 5:19, 6:38, 7:16; Philippians 2:8; 2 Corinthians 5:17–21; Hebrews 4:15, 5:8, 10:5–7

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe Jesus's obedience while on earth.
- Describe what Jesus's perfect obedience did for sinners.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

Write on the board, “How long have you gone without sinning?”

Students will review the memory verse by completing the Memory Verse Crossword and reciting the verse to a friend or to the class.

- Memory Verse Crossword for each student from the Resource DVD-ROM



Studying God's Word

Jesus lived a life of perfect obedience to His Father in heaven. His righteousness is what qualified Him to die for the sins of those who would believe. The sins of believers were placed on Jesus, and He took the penalty for sin by dying on the Cross. His righteousness is imputed to believers at the moment of salvation, so they may stand righteous before God.

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.



Activity: Three Imputations

The students will examine the connection between obedience to God in Adam and in Jesus to understand the fullness of their riches in Christ.

- Student Guides
- Pencils



Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages listed above along with this background.

Jesus is fully God and fully man. We have seen that He was born in the humblest of circumstances. Yet He was sought after by wise men who bowed before Him in worship and praise (Matthew 2:11). King Herod sought to kill him out of envy and hatred because of who He was destined to be (Matthew 2:16).

The Bible tells us that Jesus the man lived a life of perfect obedience to His Father and to the Law of God. He was without sin. Even as a child, He understood He was to be about His Father's business (Luke 2:49). And the Bible tells us that as a child He was subject to His parents and obeyed them in complete submission (Luke 2:51). Throughout His life, though tempted in all points as we are, Jesus did not succumb to the temptations, but lived a life without sin (Hebrews 4:15).

Christ's life had been preplanned by God the Father, and the man Jesus was careful to carry out every detail, obeying the Father's perfect will (Hebrews 10:7). Jesus told His disciples that He came to carry out the commandments of the one who sent Him (John 14:31). Jesus made it clear that He only did what He knew the Father would do (John 5:19). He did not come down from heaven to do His own will, but the will of the Father who sent Him (John 6:38). And this complete obedience led Him to the humiliation and suffering of death, even death on a cross (Philippians 2:8).

It is important to grasp that while a man, Jesus obeyed the Law perfectly. His perfect obedience to His Father's will demonstrated His righteousness (1 John 2:1). And Jesus is the only person who was able to live out this full righteousness before God the Father. Why is this important to know?

The answer lies in our own sinfulness. Righteousness is something we could never acquire because of our sin nature. We have sinned and fall short of God's glory (Romans 3:23). We were born in sin and in our own strength will never overcome it. God hates sin (Psalm 5:4–6) and cannot look on it because He is pure and holy (Isaiah 6:3). And yet, Jesus tells us that we are to be perfect just as our heavenly Father is perfect (Matthew 5:48). He instructs that if we love Him, we will keep His commandments (John 14:15). This is impos-

sible for sinful humans. As Isaiah records, we are like an unclean thing, and our righteousness is like filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). We are disobedient toward the holy, just God. We are not righteous. We can never measure up to the standard of perfect obedience to God's Law and commandments. Yet that is what God demands.

This brings us back to the perfect obedience of Jesus Christ to the Law—the Law that is impossible for us to keep. You see, Jesus was born of a virgin. He did not inherit Adam's sin nature. He was the perfect Son of God. Jesus's sinless life of obedience fulfilled the righteousness God required (Matthew 3:15). And Jesus is the only one who could have ever fulfilled it. This is where we see the grace, mercy, wonder, and glory of God in His plan for believers. The very righteousness that only Christ could attain is available to us—to all who believe—through faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 3:22). Through our faith in the only righteous one, Jesus Christ, we are made righteous in God's sight. God imputes Christ's righteousness to us when we place our faith in Him. "Imputes" means that God looks on Jesus, sees His righteousness demonstrated through perfect obedience to God and His Law, then applies that righteousness to us.

This exchange was made possible when Christ, who knew no sin, became sin for us and died on the Cross (2 Corinthians 5:21). Christ's righteousness was credited to our account, and our sin was laid on the sinless Son of God. As He suffered for our sins, He made the payment that was due from our account so that the justice of a holy God could be satisfied.

Christ lived a perfect life, and through faith we gain His perfection. At the same time, though, believers still battle sin, as Paul talks about in Romans 6–8. Though we are perfect positionally, having the righteousness of Christ, we still must put to death the deeds of the flesh. That is what sanctification is all about—God changing us more and more into the likeness of Christ.

HISTORICAL/APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

Grasping this idea of imputation is absolutely essential to understand your identity in Christ. Historically, we can actually talk about three imputations. The second and third imputations have been introduced above—the sin of man went to Christ's account when He died on the

Cross, and Christ's righteousness was credited to all who would believe. We see the first imputation occurring in Genesis in Adam. Adam represented all of humanity when he rebelled against God. His sin was imputed to us—it was credited to our account (Romans 5:12). Every human throughout history has been born with a sin nature and sins in word, thought, and deed. We carry a sin debt because of our disobedience to God. But God provided a way for the debt to be paid. God's eternal plan of redemption was put in place before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:3–6). God's plan made it necessary for God to step into His creation at some point in history to deal with the problem of sin.

Let's make an analogy. Say you were born with a blackboard representing your heart. Each time you sinned against God, that sin was written on that blackboard as a record against you. The record of those sins will be used to judge you after you die, and the judgment will result in punishment in hell. But there is a solution. God can wipe away all of those sins because Jesus has taken the penalty for those sins on the Cross. Your sins were imputed to Him; He died in your place for your sins. So now you have a clean blackboard—but that doesn't make you righteous, just neutral. This is why Christ's active obedience during His life is important.

Not only is it important that your sins were imputed to Christ, but you need Christ's righteousness imputed to you so that on judgment day, God will see you as righteous. When you repent of your sins and trust in Christ for salvation, your blackboard is not only erased, but you are given a whiteboard. And all of the perfectly obedient acts that Christ ever did get written down on your whiteboard in gilded calligraphy! Adam's sin was imputed to you, your sin was imputed to Christ, and as a believer, Christ's righteousness is imputed to you—three imputations at the core of Christian doctrine. This perfect obedience of Christ is what Paul was referring to in the book of Romans when he stated that it is by Christ's life that we are saved:

For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. (Romans 5:10)

Throughout the last 2,000 years of church history, there have been those who have attempted to tamper

with the doctrine of imputation and salvation in Christ alone. Pelagius was a false teacher in the fifth century who denied that Adam's sin was imputed to mankind. He believed and taught that man could do good deeds and fulfill the Law on his own. This is a form of self-righteousness that denies the need for Christ to fulfill the Law on our behalf. But the Bible is clear that we can do nothing good that pleases God apart from the Holy Spirit enabling us (Romans 8:6–9). Rather than our works making us righteous, once we are made righteous in Christ, we are able to do the things that please God (Ephesians 2:8–10).

The Son of God humbled Himself, coming in the form of a man so that He might identify with us and become our representative. He obeyed in full the Law that we were not able to keep so that He could give us His righteousness. As God, Jesus was able to bear the infinite punishment for sin. Let us look to Christ, the God-man, who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despised the shame, and is now seated at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:2). He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the Cross, that we might die to sin and live for righteousness (1 Peter 2:24). What a glorious mystery and hope-giving truth!



BEFORE THE THRONE

Lord Jesus, obedient, selfless, and righteous! You accomplished God's perfect will for your life, every day, every hour, every moment—including the humiliation and the suffering that led up to your death on the Cross. Your perfect obedience was necessary to appease a perfect God and Judge. You died for me, and for all believers, that we might live! Help me explain this mystery to my students. Quicken their minds so they will come to you in humility, repentance, and faith. Move their hearts to understand the sacrifice Jesus made once for all, that they may be saved from an eternity in hell and, by faith and grace, enter into an eternity with the Creator and Sustainer of the universe!



Review

We have spent the last two lessons learning about the very early days of Jesus's life. Last week we specifically talked about the two different responses that the dignitaries had to the birth of the young King.

? Who can give us a summary of the two different responses—from King Herod and the wise men—that we studied last week?

The wise men responded to Jesus by submitting to Him as King and offering worship and gifts of tribute. Herod responded by seeking to kill the young King.

These two responses are symbolic for the way that all of mankind responds to Jesus—they either reject Him as their king

or embrace Him with the worship due the King of the universe. You are either for Jesus or against Him—as He made clear in His own words recorded in Luke 11:23. I hope you have been careful to examine your own response to Jesus to understand if you are truly submitting to Him as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Our lesson today moves us along the timeline of the life of Jesus and another extremely important doctrine for us to understand, the active obedience of Jesus.



► Write on the board, "How long have you gone without sinning?"



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

Let's read Luke 2:39–52 together. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? Where were Joseph and his family living after they returned from Egypt?
They were living in Nazareth in the region of Galilee.
- ? How is the young Jesus described? *He grew to be strong in spirit and filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was with Him.*
- ? How old was Jesus when He travelled to Jerusalem? *He was 12 years old. This is one year before the traditional age of becoming a bar mitzvah (son of the commandments) as a rite of passage into manhood.*
- ? What was the reason they were in Jerusalem? *They were there for the Passover feast.*
- ? What was the reason they were celebrating Passover? *The Passover commemorated the Exodus from Egypt and was commanded by God as a perpetual feast. Exodus 23:14–15 gives the command that the Exodus should be commemorated each year (called the Feast of Unleavened Bread here and Passover in Deuteronomy 16:1) in the Hebrew month of Abib. Technically, the Passover is a one-day feast followed by the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, but the two are commonly referred to together as in Luke 22:1.*

- ? **What happened at the end of the feast?** *The family headed back to Nazareth.*
- ? **How did Jesus get left behind in Jerusalem?** *Mary and Joseph had assumed Jesus was in the group they were traveling with. They did not ensure He was in the group before they left. Travel in a large group provided safety.*
- ? **How long was it before His parents realized that Jesus was not with them?** *They had traveled a day's journey. The total trip was over 80 miles through Jericho and up the Jordan River, so it would have taken a minimum of four days to make the trip.*
- ? **How long did it take them to find Jesus?** *Three days.*
- ? **How do we understand the duration of "three days" in the context of the passage?** *It is likely three days since they left Jerusalem: one day travel before they realized Jesus was missing, one day to travel back, and part of another day to locate Him within the city.*
- ? **Where did they find Jesus?** *He was in the Temple area.*
- ? **What was He doing there?** *He was sitting with the teachers, listening, asking questions, and answering their questions.*
- ? **How did others react to the young Jesus?** *They were astonished at His understanding and answers to their questions.*
- ? **How did Mary respond upon finding Jesus in the Temple?** *She was amazed and then offered a rebuke to Jesus.*
- ? **What does the response of the young Jesus reveal about His knowledge of His mission?** *He knew that He was to be doing the work of the Father.*
- ? **What contrast does Jesus's statement about a father make with Mary's statement?** *While Mary referred to Joseph as His father, Jesus acknowledged His heavenly Father as the one He was seeking to obey.*
- ? **How did His parents react to His response to them?** *They did not understand what He was saying about doing His Father's business.*
- ? **As Jesus returned to Nazareth with them, how did He act toward His parents?** *He was subject, or obedient, to them.*
- ? **What continued to happen to Jesus from this point on?** *He grew in wisdom, in stature, and in favor with God and men.*

Discover the Truth

From the time Jesus was about two to the time He was about 30, this is the only information we have about His life as a young man. As we know from many other passages we have studied, Jesus came to be the perfect sacrifice for our sins. What we see demonstrated in this passage, especially at the end, is the obedience of Jesus to both His heavenly Father and His earthly parents.

Let's look at His obedience to the Father in several other passages to demonstrate this truth from Scripture. Jesus came to earth to perfectly

fulfill the will of the Father. That truth is seen in three places in the Gospel of John. *Assign readers for these verses.*

John 5:19

? What does John 5:19 tell us about the things Jesus does? *Jesus does those things He sees the Father do. The Son imitates the Father.*

John 6:38

? Based on John 6:38, why did Jesus come to earth? *To do the Father's will, not His own.*

John 7:16

? From John 7:16, what did Jesus teach as His doctrine? *It was from the Father, not from Himself.*

From those three verses, and many more we could point to, Jesus was obedient to the Father in all things. Now let's look at how the writer of Hebrews describes this concept. *Assign readers for these verses.*

Hebrews 4:15

? In Hebrews 4:15, Jesus is referred to as our High Priest. What does this verse teach us about the obedience of the God-man, Jesus Christ? *He was tempted just as we are, but He never sinned.*

Hebrews 5:8

? How did Jesus behave in His work as High Priest on our behalf based on Hebrews 5:8? *He learned obedience through His suffering—He was obedient.*

Hebrews 10:5–7

? In this prophetic quoting of Psalm 40:6–8 in Hebrews 10:5–7, why did Jesus take a body and come to earth? *He came to do the will of the Father.*

Philippians 2:8

? Let's look at one last passage, Philippians 2:8. How obedient was Jesus? *He was obedient to the point of dying on the Cross.*

? In light of all of these passages, did Jesus sin by disobeying His parents when He stayed in Jerusalem at the Temple while His parents were traveling? *Since being disobedient to parents is a sin (Ephesians 6:1–3; Exodus 20:12), Jesus could not have sinned or His obedience would not have been perfect.*

? What attribute of God is demonstrated in the sinless life of Jesus? *Holy: He cannot sin and hates all sin.*

HOLY

Even in the few passages that we have examined, it is absolutely clear that the Son came to the earth to perfectly obey the will of the Father. Jesus lived a life of perfect obedience to the Law and to the will of His Father. Perfect! Without ever sinning once. If we are honest with ourselves, that should sound impossible. We sin all the time and must be constantly seeking forgiveness of God through repentance.

Jesus lived over 30 years on this earth and never once sinned in thought, word, or deed. He *always* did what pleased the Father. And for that, we should be eternally grateful. Let's find out why that should stir up gratitude in our hearts.





Three Imputations

MATERIALS

- Student Guides
- Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

In your Student Guide you will find an activity titled Three Imputations.

Let's talk about that big word in the title. To impute means to credit to an account. It could be used as an accounting term where a debit or credit is applied to an account, much like you would record withdrawals and deposits in a checking account.

Your job is to relate the three imputations described in Scripture to your salvation.
Have the students work in groups to complete the activity.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

Discuss the three imputations with the students.

The First Imputation

- ? **Genesis 3:17–19** *Adam brought sin into the world as the first man to sin.*
- ? **Psalms 51:5** *Each person is born in a sinful condition.*
- ? **Romans 5:12** *Death spread to all men through Adam's sin, so all people are sinful.*
- ? **What has been credited to all people in Adam?** *All people have been credited with sin through Adam, carrying original sin as a stain.*

The Second Imputation

- ? **Isaiah 53:4–6** *The sins of people are placed on Jesus.*
- ? **1 Peter 2:24** *Jesus bore our sins on the tree (Cross).*
- ? **What has been credited to Christ from men?** *The sins of men were placed on Christ on the Cross, bringing God's wrath against sin upon Him.*

The Third Imputation

- ? **Isaiah 53:11** *The righteous servant, Jesus, will justify (make righteous) many people.*
- ? **Romans 5:18–19** *The obedience of Jesus makes many righteous.*
- ? **What has been credited to all those who are in Christ?** *The righteousness of Christ is credited to those who repent and believe in Him.*
- ? **How does understanding each of these three imputations help you grasp the fullness of the salvation that you have in Christ?** *As a sinner in Adam, we need a substitute to bear our sins and take the wrath of God we deserve and also to stand in our place in perfect obedience to all of God's commands. All of that has been made possible in Christ—He bore our sins, and we receive His righteousness.*

Each of us is born into Adam's sin—we have inherited original sin with Adam as our head. God sees us all as sinners in Adam. Thank God that we have another person to represent us, but for righteousness. Jesus, the Last Adam, lived in perfect obedience to the Father so that we could be credited with His work. When God looks at those who are in Christ, they are seen not as sinners in Adam but as righteous in Christ. Not only have our sins been wiped away through the work on the Cross but we can be credited with the righteousness of Christ. We are not just neutral in God's eyes—having our sins removed—we are seen as righteous and as if we had perfectly obeyed God in all things. Our crucified and risen Savior has offered us His righteousness in exchange for our sins. There can be no greater gift!



READ THE WORD

Let's look at one last passage together and try to wrap up this concept. Turn to 2 Corinthians 5 and we will read verses 17–21. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? What is every person in Christ? *A new creation.*
- ? Who has reconciled us to God? *He has reconciled us Himself.*
- ? How have we been reconciled to God? *The Father reconciled us through Jesus Christ to Himself.*
- ? What are we committed to in light of this salvation we have? *We are to share that with others through the ministry of reconciliation.*
- ? What role do we have now that we have been reconciled to God in Christ? *We are ambassadors of God to reconcile those who are still in their sins to the Father by proclaiming what has been done in Christ.*
- ? According to verse 21, how are people reconciled? *Jesus took our sin and has given us His righteousness so that we might have favor with God.*

Discover the Truth

Just as God has placed our sins on Christ and given us His righteousness in return, there are many who are still in Adam—they still bear their sin debt and face God's just wrath for that sin. We have the privilege to work as ambassadors of God to tell people about the offer of forgiveness available in Christ. We get to proclaim that good news. We get to call people to recognize their own sinfulness and turn in repentant faith to the only one who can free them from their sin debt. We get to proclaim the love and mercy that has made us new creations in Christ Jesus.

That should be seen as a great privilege and a great responsibility.



Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

As we think about the obedience of Jesus, our hearts should soar with thankfulness. All of our sins—past, present, and future—have been placed on Him on the Cross. All the wrath that we deserve from God was poured out on Him in our place. He was obedient to the point of death on the Cross.

But even more, God sees all of Christ's righteous deeds as credited to our account. The debt that we could never pay has been wiped out, and we have been given a reward that exceeds anything imaginable—we have eternal life with God the Father through the work of God the Son and are kept by the seal of God the Holy Spirit. We have much to be thankful for because of the perfect obedience of Jesus. He became sin, who knew no sin, that we may become the righteousness of God in Him.

As Isaiah proclaims in Isaiah 61:10:

I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,
My soul shall be joyful in my God;
For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation,
He has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
As a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments,
And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

- ? **Using an analogy, how would you compare your obedience to God with Jesus's obedience to God?** *Discuss various answers, emphasizing the corruption of man in Adam and the perfection of Christ as God in the flesh.*
- ? **How has thinking about this topic given you a greater appreciation of what has been done for you in Christ?** *Discuss various answers, acknowledging the great exchange that has taken place in each person's salvation.*
- ? **Knowing that you are called to be an ambassador of reconciliation, how can you use your own experience of reconciliation to share the hope you have with others?** *Each Christian has a testimony of how God reconciled them to Himself in Christ. Sharing that story can be a great way to show others their need for Christ, but the focus must be directed to the other person's sin and the holiness of God. Sharing our testimony is not the same thing as proclaiming the gospel. We should plead with others to be reconciled to God and call them to repent of their sins and turn to Christ, knowing that when they do they can become new creations and be right with God, just as we have experienced.*
- ? **The denial of original sin in Adam has been considered a heresy throughout Church history. The false teacher Pelagius taught that man was born as a blank slate and could fulfill the Law of God in his own power. Why is this such a dangerous and unbiblical teaching?** *To deny that all men have sinned in Adam is to deny the clear teaching of Scripture. Some people try to do this to say that each person is responsible for their own sin, not the sin of Adam. But if we deny that Adam was our representative and brought sin into the world, then, to be consistent, we would also have to deny that Jesus could take our penalty as our representative. We must acknowledge the imputation of sin to all humanity so that Jesus can offer Himself in our place as the Last Adam, and His righteousness can be imputed to us. Outside of the biblical understanding, there is only a form of self-righteousness that will only condemn us.*
- ? **It is becoming popular in Christianity to accept the evolutionary explanation of history, even to the point of saying that there was no man**

named Adam, but that we evolved from a group of hominids. These people see Adam as a metaphor for explaining our sinful condition, but not as a real person. What danger does this idea carry in light of our **discussion today**? *If there was no Adam who sinned as our head, then there isn't really any forgiveness available in Christ—Romans 5:12–21 makes this very clear. If Adam was simply a metaphor, then why do we need a real God-man to be our representative for righteousness? This idea is very dangerous as it undermines the need for Jesus to come as the Last Adam to be our substitute. If there was no real man Adam, there is no need for a real Savior in Jesus.*



MEMORY VERSE

Philippians 2:8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.



GROUP PRAYER TIME

Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.

- Thank God for sending Jesus to bear our sins in exchange for His righteousness.
- Praise God for His holiness displayed in Christ as God in flesh.
- Ask God for wisdom and boldness to serve as ambassadors to reconcile others to Himself through Christ.