

Jesus the Son

I remember sitting at dinner in the dining hall of Knox College. I was with members of my seminary class and my parents who were visiting. My mother was a woman of deep faith. She was an active member of our church and almost always involved in a study group. As we were enjoying the meal and chatting casually, my mother asked my friend, Herb, who was already an ordained minister and at Knox to do an advanced degree, “Herb, is Jesus God?”

Herb thought for a moment and in his strong Carolinian accent, he said, “Why yes ma’am, I believe he is.”

The Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit ... can Jesus be two of those personas? Or even 3. Can God be all 3? What do you think?

Living Faith is a wonderful resource for us to go back to again and again. It is based on the early Creeds of the church and of course Scripture. Section 3:2 on page 10 is entitled Jesus Christ: Truly

God. This passage in Living Faith tells us that God became man and dwelt among us – the incarnation ... God in the flesh ... It goes on to speak about God in Christ. It says Jesus Christ is Lord. He is one with the Father.

Theologian Claudia Setzer writes – “The images of Jesus throughout history are as varied as the people who have embraced him – the Son of God, the Divine Word by whom the world was created, the Passover sacrifice on behalf of the people, the Suffering Servant who takes on the sins of the world, the new High Priest, or more recently, Jesus the intellectual genius, the liberator of the oppressed, the marginalized and the dispossessed. Each group and generation sees in Jesus a reflection of itself.

One of the things we know about Jesus is that he was a Jew.

Jews have been fascinated by Jesus. When Jews began to think about their own history, they had to consider him as part of it.

Sporadic references to Jesus in the Talmud are less than complimentary. Setzer writes – “Jewish writers typically separated Jesus the Jew from the Christianity that incorporated him, approving of the former but disliking the latter. They have often characterized him as simply another Jewish holy man, unexceptional beyond his later public-relations image, or so unlike Jewish expectations of a Messiah. His lack of acceptance by most early Jews was utterly unsurprising.”

Last week I asked you to think about how you would define or even draw a picture of God. Today, I am asking you to consider how you would define or describe Jesus. What qualities and characteristics would you ascribe to Jesus?

Although there are references to the one who is to come throughout the Old Testament, we first meet Jesus early in the first 3 Books of the New Testament, Matthew, Mark and Luke. There are some Wisemen involved, a pregnant unwed teenage

girl, a star, a stable, some shepherds and angels. But our understanding and appreciation for Jesus does not rest there, nor should it.

There are many claims which could be made about Jesus.

I am going to make 5. See where you agree or disagree.

#1. Jesus was truly human –

Jesus was a real person. He existed in history. He was as human as you or me. People who accept this first level of understanding about Jesus are simply acknowledging He was a real historical person.

This claim is based on the strength of the eyewitness accounts (known as Gospels) and on the secondary secular accounts of historians who recorded the subsequent movement in the 1st Century called “Christianity”. The Gospel writers claimed they were simply recording their eyewitness observations:

2 Peter 1:16-17 *We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.*

1 John 1:1-2 *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched – this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us.*

Non-Christian accounts also report on the person of Jesus and the movement resulting from Jesus' life.

2. Jesus Was A Great Moral Teacher –

Even those who reject the possibility of the supernatural or the existence of God may accept the idea Jesus was a real man who lived in the ancient past. And many of these folks also have no problem accepting the additional claim Jesus was also a great moral teacher.

Few people would reject Jesus as among the greatest of moral teachers, based on his sermons and proclamations related to moral behavior. Even atheists who attack the moral character of the God of the Old Testament (citing the God-directed treatment of the enemies of Israel, for example), will usually embrace the moral teaching of Jesus. They are aware of the moral proclamations Jesus made in His most famous sermons.

Luke 6:27-38 *“But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; and whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either. Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back. Treat others the same way you want them to treat you. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive,*

what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same amount. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons and daughters of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil people. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned. Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure – pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.”

Few people reject the moral power of Jesus’ teachings. The concepts of love and mercy He proposed are still as radical today as they were over two thousand years ago.

3. Jesus was A Prophet of God –

Let’s raise the bar a little higher on this man we know as Jesus. We’ve already made the claim He was a real man who lived in

history, and the claim He was a great moral teacher. Let's add the additional claim that He was a prophet of God.

Those who believe Jesus was a great moral teacher may search for the foundation of this teaching, and when they do, they often decide God Himself was the source of moral truth Jesus proclaimed. Many conclude Jesus, speaking as a prophet of God, had special revelation from God in the tradition of other prophets who had predictive powers.

This belief that Jesus is a prophet of God is often based on two observations. First, it is clear Jesus had the power to predict the future. He made several accurate predictions:

Luke 22:33-34 *But he (Peter) replied, 'Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death.' Jesus answered, 'I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me.'*

Luke 21:23-24 *There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. They will fall by the sword and will be taken*

as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

Matthew 16:16-18 *Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Jesus replied, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.'*

#4. Jesus performed Miracles –

People who accept the fact that Jesus spoke prophetically and made proclamations with the authority of God, may also believe this additional claim related to Jesus' power to control the forces of nature and perform miracles.

Here is a partial list:

He turned water into wine. He healed a number of people born blind. He raised Lazarus from the dead. He produced the catch of fishes. He healed the ten lepers. He calmed the storm. He was transfigured. He was resurrected. He ascended to Heaven.

#5. Jesus Is God –

Based on the fact Jesus said He was God, displayed all of God's attributes, and demonstrated His supernatural command over the natural realm, Jesus is, in fact, God.

All worldviews have distinctive beliefs and characteristics distinguishing them from other ways of viewing the world.

Christianity is no different. When it comes to the nature of Jesus, [the Deity of Christ is a Christian essential](#). It has been affirmed by believers over the centuries based on the reliable eyewitness testimony of those who saw Jesus rise from the dead. Jesus was all man and all God and as part of the triune Godhead, Jesus is the uncreated Creator of the universe. Truly human. Truly Divine. As bold and exclusive as this claim may seem, it is the defining and distinctive teaching of the Bible. To reject the nature of Jesus is to reject the clear teaching of the Scriptures.

5 Characteristics of Jesus –

Truly Human

A great moral teacher

A prophet

A miracle worker

Truly Divine

May Jesus now and always be your friend, your teacher, your guide and your light. May His life make a difference in yours!

Amen.