

Was Jesus Christ God?

Jesus Christ was undoubtedly a remarkable man. His religious teachings have had a profound effect on world history. They have been examined and debated by theologians and philosophers throughout the centuries, and have been a source of great inspiration to his many followers.

His influence on the world is all the more remarkable given the unlikely circumstances of his life. He was born about 2000 years ago into a poor family in the small town of Nazareth in Israel. He received no formal education, and made a humble living as a carpenter. When he was about thirty years old, he became the spiritual leader of a small band of disciples made up mostly of social outcasts and misfits. The religious leaders of his day rejected him, as did most of his own people (the Jews), including some of his immediate family. His ministry was short-lived (no more than three years), and ended with him being tried, convicted and executed as a criminal.

Despite this unimpressive beginning, Christianity went on to become the greatest religion the world has ever known. Whole nations have been founded on Christian principles, and remain to this day the dominant and most successful nations on earth. Greater still, is the multitude of believers from every tribe, race and nation on earth that have committed their lives Christ.

Jesus of Nazareth, without money and arms, conquered more millions than Alexander, Caesar, Mohammed and Napoleon; without science and learning, he shed more light on things human and divine, than all the philosophers and scholars combined; without the eloquence of the school, he spoke words of life such as were never spoken before, nor since, and produced effects which lie beyond the reach of orator or poet; without writing a single line, he has set more pens in motion and furnished themes for more sermons, orations, discussions, works of art, learned volumes, and sweet songs of praise than the whole army of great men of ancient and modern times. Born in a manger and crucified as a malefactor, he now controls the destinies of the civilised world, and rules a spiritual empire which embraces one-third of the inhabitants of the globe – Philip Schaff.

The central message that Jesus gave the world was one of peace with God and salvation through faith. But it was not for this that he was put to death by the religious leaders of his day. The single greatest difficulty with Jesus Christ is that he claimed to be God incarnate – that is, God in the flesh. To many religious people this claim is blasphemous, and to others it is inconceivable.

But what if it was true? What if Jesus Christ *was* God in the form of a man? Surely this is a question at least worthy of investigation. What a terrible thing it would be to miss out, through ignorance, on the opportunity to know God as one of us.

If ever God was man or man was God, Jesus Christ was both – Lord Byron.

If the life and death of Socrates are those of a philosopher, the life and death of Jesus Christ are those of a God – Rousseau.

I know men, and I tell you, Christ was not a man. Everything about Christ astonishes me. His spirit overwhelms and confounds me. There is no comparison between him and any other being. He stands single and alone – Napoleon.

If ever the Divine appeared on earth, it was in the person of Christ – Goethe.

This paper presents compelling evidence that Jesus Christ really was God.

The Reality of Christ

No serious scholar of history has ever proposed the non-historicity of Jesus Christ. Scepticism regarding the existence of Christ does not come from people who are experts in ancient history, but from those who are non-specialists.

Some writers may toy with the fancy of a “Christ-myth”, but they do not do so on the grounds of historical evidence. The historicity of Christ is as axiomatic for an unbiased historian as the historicity of Julius Caesar. It is not historians who propagate the “Christ-myth” theories – Prof. F. F. Bruce.

It is no use to say that Christ, as exhibited in the Gospels, is not historical. Who amongst his disciples or amongst his proselytes, was capable of inventing the sayings ascribed to Jesus, or of imagining the life and character revealed in the Gospels? Certainly not the fishermen of Galilee; as certainly not St. Paul, whose own idiosyncrasies were of a totally different sort – John Stuart Mill.

Secularists seldom pay serious attention to religious issues and one should not expect to find an abundance of evidences from secular sources. However, there is adequate evidence to establish the historicity of the biblical narratives. The following are some examples:

They were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang an anthem to Christ as God, and bound themselves by a solemn oath not to commit any wicked deed ... – Pliny the Younger, governor of Bithynia, AD 112.

What advantage did the Jews gain from executing their wise King? It was just after that their kingdom was abolished – Mara Bar-Serapion in a letter to his son in reference to Jesus Christ, AD 70 to 150.

Christus, from whom they got their name, has been executed by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilate, when Tiberius was emperor ... – Cornelius Tacitus governor of Asia Minor and Roman historian, AD 112.

As the Jews were making constant disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he expelled them from Rome – Suetonius, Roman historian, in his book “The Life of Claudius”, AD 120.

There are also many references to Jesus in Jewish writings:

Balaam looked forth and saw that there was a man, born of a woman, who would rise up and seek to make himself God, and cause the whole world to go astray – Rabbi Eliezer (The Talmud).

Whatever else may be thought of the evidence from early Jewish and Gentile writers ... it does at least establish, for those who refuse the witness of Christian writings, the historical character of Jesus himself – Prof. F. F. Bruce.

What Jesus Said About Himself

Many people, including his opponents, have admired the teachings of Jesus for their wisdom and insight into life and God. But what stands out most about him, and sets him apart from all other religious leaders, are the astonishing claims that he made about himself. For example, he claimed:

To Exist Before He Was Born

Jesus spoke of the glory he shared with his father “before the world began” (John 17:5). On another occasion, the people wanted to stone him for claiming to exist before Abraham, who lived about 2000 years earlier (John 8:58).

To Come from Heaven

“You are from below, I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world” (John 8:23).

“No-one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven – the Son of Man” (John 3:13).

“For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. ... I am the bread of life” (John 6:33, 35).

Jesus also claimed to have been sent into the world by his Father (e.g., Luke 10:16 and John 4:34).

To be the Son of God

Jesus constantly spoke of God as his Father. Often he called him “my Father” (e.g., Matthew 15:13 and Luke 2:49). In one instance, Jesus addressed God by the Aramaic term *abba* (Mark 14:36), which is an intimate title that a young child would use, like our *dad* or even *daddy*. The use of such a familiar term for God was scandalous to the Jews.

But Jesus went even further. He also claimed:

- To be the only one who knew the Father and, therefore, the only one who could reveal him to others (Matthew 11:27; John 6:46).
- To be one with the Father (John 10:30, 38).
- That everything that belonged to the Father belonged to him (John 16:15; 17:10).
- That the Father would send the Holy Spirit to believers in his name (John 14:26).
- That the Father would answer our prayers in his name (John 14:13; 15:16; 16:23-24).
- To be the Son of God (Matthew 16:15-17; 21:37; Mark 14:61-62; Luke 22:70; John 10:36). There were also occasions when others referred to him as the Son of God, and he accepted this title (e.g., Matthew 14:33; 16:15-17; John 1:49-50).

To Have the Authority of God

Jesus claimed that he had authority to forgive people their sins (Matthew 9:1-8), to be the judge of the world (John 5:27-30), to answer prayer (John 14:13), and to grant eternal life (John 3:16; 11:25-26). These are things that only God can do.

After he had been raised from the dead, Jesus said to his disciples, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Matthew 28:18). However, Jesus never placed himself above his Father. At one time he told his disciples, “the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me” (John 14:31).

To Have Complete Authority Over the Lives of His Disciples

Jesus expected his disciples to place him first in their lives above all else, including family, possessions and even life itself (Matthew 8:21-22; 10:37; 19:29; Luke 14:26-33). He expected them to suffer insults and persecution and slander for his sake (Matthew 5:11, Luke 6:22), and to lose their lives for his sake (Matthew 10:39; 16:25). He expected them to acknowledge him before others and he in turn would acknowledge them before his Father (Matthew 10:32).

Jesus said, “My Father will honour the one who serves me” (John 12:26). He claimed to be the disciples’ Lord, Master and Teacher (Matthew 23:8-10; John 13:14), and said that they could do nothing of any significance without him (John 15:5). He also received worship from his disciples (Matthew 14:33).

Jesus also claimed to be a king, but over a kingdom which is “not of this world” (Matthew 25:34; 27:11; Luke 22:29-30; John 1:49-50; 18:36-37). He commonly referred to himself as “The Son of Man” (e.g., John 3:13). This is a figure who appears in the book of Daniel as one who is given a kingdom of universal domain and eternal duration (Daniel 7:13-14). This kingdom will be established at a future time, when Jesus returns with “power and great glory” and with authority to judge the world (Matthew 7:22-23; 13:41; 16:27; 24:30; 25:31-46; 26:64; Luke 9:26; John 5:22-23, 27-30; 6:40).

To be Sinless

Jesus challenged his opponents to prove him guilty of sin (John 8:46). He also claimed that he always did what pleased his Father (John 8:29), and that the devil had no hold on him (John 14:30). No rational person would dare to make such outrageous claims about their own goodness and expect to be believed. And no rational person, apart from Jesus, has ever tried.

To be the Truth

Jesus said that his purpose for coming into the world was to “testify to the truth”, and that those who are “on the side of truth” would listen to him (John 18:37). He went even further and declared, “I am the Truth” (John 14:6). Therefore, he was able to claim:

- The right to interpret the commands of God previously given through Moses (Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28).
- To be the “Lord of the Sabbath” and to have the right to say what was lawful on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:1-8).
- That hearing and obeying his teaching was the only solid foundation for life (Matthew 7:24-27).
- That his words would never pass away (Matthew 24:35).
- That hearing his word is necessary for attaining eternal life (John 5:24).
- That his teaching came from God and that he only said the things that his Father told him to say (John 7:16; 8:40; 12:49-50).
- That we will be judged according to his words (John 12:48).
- That attention to his words was a requirement for having our prayers answered (John 15:7).
- That those who keep his word will not see death (John 8:51).

Jesus prefaced many of his teachings with the words: “I tell you the truth ...”

To be the Fulfilment of Prophecy

Jesus said that he had come to fulfil the Old Testament prophecies (Matthew 5:17; 11:2-6; 26:54, 56; Luke 4:17-21; 24:25-27, 44), and that the Old Testament scriptures spoke about him (John 5:39-40, 46). He declared himself to be the Messiah¹ foretold in the Scriptures (Matthew 16:16-17; 26:63-64; John 4:25-26), and told his disciples that they were blessed to witness what had been foretold (Matthew 13:16-17).

To Give Eternal Life

Jesus said that he would give eternal life to those who believe in him (John 3:14-16; 6:27, 40, 51; 10:28; 11:25-26; 17:1-2). He associated following him with entering the kingdom of heaven and inheriting eternal life (Matthew 19:21-23, 28-29). But he went even further,

¹*Messiah* is the Hebrew word for “Saviour”, and *Christ* is the Greek word.

claiming to be the *only* entrance into heaven (John 10:9), and the *only* way to the Father (John 14:6).

To Forgive Sin

Jesus claimed the right to forgive sins (Matthew 9:1-8; Luke 7:48-49). He said that he had come to establish a new covenant between God and man, which would replace those established with Abraham and Moses, and would be based on the remission of sins through his sacrificial death (Matthew 26:26-28; Luke 22:20; Mark 10:45).

Conversely, Jesus taught that not believing in him is the ultimate sin (John 16:8-9), and that those who do not believe in him will die in their sins (John 8:24).

To be the Same as God

On a number of occasions Jesus spoke of himself as being the same in essence as God.

So close was his connection with God that he equated a man's attitude to himself with the man's attitude to God. Thus, to know Jesus was to know God (John 8:19; 14:7). To see him was to see God (John 12:45; 14:9). To believe in him was to believe in God (John 12:44). To receive him was to receive God (Mark 9:37). To hate him was to hate God (John 15:23). And to honour him was to honour God (John 5:23) – John Stott.

On one occasion, Jesus applied the sacred name of God to himself. When Moses asked God what his name was, he was told: "I Am Who I Am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I Am has sent you.'" (Exodus 3:13-14). The name "I Am" sounds like, and has been translated into, the Hebrew word *Jehovah*. This is equivalent to our English title *Lord*. In an argument with some Jews, Jesus said to them: "I tell you the truth, before Abraham was born, I am!" (John 8:58). At this, the people picked up stones with which to kill him, but he slipped away unharmed.

Jesus also used a number of images to describe himself which relate to images of God in the Old Testament:

"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty" (John 6:35).

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12).

"I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved" (John 10:9).

"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me – just as the Father knows me and I know the Father – and I lay down my life for the sheep" (John 10:14).

"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die" (John 11:25-26).

"I am the way and the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ... I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:1, 5).

There is no half-way house and there is no parallel in other religions. If you had gone to Buddha and asked him, "Are you the son of Bramah?" he would have said, "My son, you are still in the vale of illusion." If you had gone to Socrates and asked, "Are you Zeus?" he would have laughed at you. If you had gone to Mohammed and asked, "Are you Allah?" he would first have rent his cloths and then cut your head off. If you had asked Confucius, "Are you Heaven?" I think

he would have probably replied, "Remarks which are not in accordance with nature are in bad taste" – C. S. Lewis.

No founder of any religion has dared to claim for himself one fraction of the assertions made by the Lord Jesus Christ about himself. No religion has claimed for its founder what Christianity has claimed for the Lord Jesus Christ. No founder of any religion has been as highly acclaimed by those of other faiths as has the Lord Jesus Christ – Henry J. Heydt.

Are the Claims that Christ Made About Himself True?

Faced with the astonishing claims that Christ made about himself leaves us with only four possible conclusions:

1. Jesus claimed to be God, but was not – therefore, he was a **liar**.
2. Jesus thought that he was God, but was not – therefore, he was a **lunatic**.
3. Jesus never claimed to be God, but his followers created the idea – therefore, he was a **legend**.
4. Jesus claimed to be God because he was God – therefore, he is **Lord**.

A serious reflection on the character and teachings of Christ will rule out the first two positions. The Christ of the gospels does not fit the position of a liar or a lunatic. Nor do his teachings give any indication of fraud or insanity. Instead, they show insight and wisdom as yet unsurpassed by any other religious founder, moralist, or philosopher. The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), for example, is still regarded today as presenting the best system of principles for daily living.

If you were to take the sum total of all the authoritative articles ever written by the most qualified of psychologists and psychiatrists on the subject of mental hygiene – if you were to combine them, and refine them, and cleave out the excess verbiage – if you were to take the whole of the meat and none of the parsley, and if you were to have these unadulterated bits of pure scientific knowledge concisely expressed by the most capable of living poets, you would have an awkward and incomplete summation of the Sermon on the Mount – Dr. James T. Fisher.

The third position above is ruled out by the improbability that Jesus was invented by his disciples, many of whom were uneducated and simple people. The writings of the New Testament making up the historical account of the life and teachings of Jesus come across as completely authentic. There is no evidence of deception or inconsistency in the writings, or of egotism or self-interest on the part of the writers. Instead, they present a genuine devotion to a central theme: that Jesus Christ is the Saviour. To this end, his disciples were prepared to suffer and to lay down their lives.

The fourth position is the only reasonable conclusion to draw. This conclusion is also supported by the following evidence:

His Character Supports His Claims

In all history has there been anyone whose character and sheer goodness has shone so brightly? Although his claims seem egocentric, his life-style was humble. He avoided publicity and refused to perform miracles to please the crowds. He taught his disciples that service to others was the mark of greatness. He left them with a servant model by washing their feet. He deliberately sought out the despised of society, yet seemed equally at ease with the upper classes.

His life exemplified his own teaching. He said to the religious Jews, "How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from

the only God”, and at the same time appeared immune to the praise or blame of others. He taught that “a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions”, and demonstrated his own freedom from the grip of material things. As far as we know, he only possessed the cloths he wore. He condemned hypocrisy in others and gave no hint of it in himself. His attitude to women was in sharp contrast to the customs of the age, indeed of any age. His self-assurance and courage stand out clearly, and nowhere more so than at his execution.

He told his disciples to love their enemies and he himself prayed for forgiveness for those who nailed him on the cross. His compassion for others comes through in every chapter of the story. If, as the New Testament constantly affirms, he laid down his life for the sins of the human race, to reconcile people to God, we have here an example of love that is beyond human comprehension.

It is interesting to note what his closest friends made of him. John declared, “We have seen his glory ... full of grace and truth” (John 1:14) and “in him is no sin” (1 John 3:5). Peter said, “He committed no sin” (1 Peter 2:22). These were men who spent three years as his closest companions.

At his trial his enemies could find no evidence against him, other than that of blasphemy for claiming to be the Messiah, and of insurrection for claiming to be a king. Pilate, though allowing him to be crucified out of cowardice, declared twice, “I find no basis for a charge against him” (John 19:4, 6). Even the traitor Judas confessed that he had betrayed an innocent man (Matthew 27:4).

His Teaching Supports His Claims

One aspect of his teachings that constantly impressed his hearers was the authoritative manner with which he spoke: “... the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one with authority, and not as their teachers of the law” (Matthew 7:29); “The people were all so amazed that they asked one another, ‘What is this? A new teaching – and with authority!’” (Mark 1:27). Jesus never quoted any authorities other than the Old Testament scriptures. He never said, “Rabbi so-and-so says this”. Neither did he hide behind the authority of Jehovah as the prophets of old: “Thus says the Lord”. He simply declared, “Truly I say to you ...”.

There is a wisdom and comprehensiveness about the ethical teaching of Christ that has never been surpassed. He dealt with all the most vital issues of life: our relationship with God and with one another, our attitude to material possessions, our motivations and goals in life, and the relationship of this life to the next.

I call myself a Christian because I discern in the New Testament a man whose life, death and central teaching penetrates more deeply into the mysterious reality of our condition than anyone or anything else has ever done. In the Gospels, Acts, and Epistles, I find a total view of what man is, of what he could be and ought to be, which evokes a response in me such as no other writings have ever done – Philip Toynbee.

During the last 2000 years no teaching on the subject of how people should behave has emerged that represents any advance on Jesus’ model.

... since the days of Christ, in spite of all the progress of thought, not a single new ethical ideal has been given to the world – G. Thomas.

There is also a challenge in his teaching that has not been equalled. He drew attention to thoughts and motives as well as outward behaviour (Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28; Mark 7:6, 21-23; Luke 12:15; John 5:44). There is an uncanny way in which he always gets to the core of an issue. It is therefore difficult to study the gospels with moral neutrality.

Jesus also had the ability to take the ordinary experiences of everyday people and use them to illustrate, in unforgettable ways, the deeper truths of life. The method of his teaching, as well

as its content, was unique. Although he had never had higher education he impressed his hearers: “The Jews were amazed and asked, ‘How did this man get such learning without having studied?’” (John 7:14). How indeed?

... the discrepancy between the depth and sanity and (let me add) shrewdness of his moral teaching, and the rampant megalomania which must lie behind his theological teaching, unless he is indeed God, has never been satisfactorily got over – C. S. Lewis.

His Miracles Support His Claims

The gospel stories contain numerous examples of Jesus healing all kinds of illnesses and, in three instances, raising the dead. He also demonstrated his authority over nature. These miracles, as Archibald Alexander puts it:

... were performed, for the most part, in an open and public manner, in the presence of multitudes of witnesses, under the inspection of learned and malignant enemies, in a great variety of circumstances, and for several years in succession. His enemies never denied these signs – Archibald Alexander.

In today’s materialistic world these miracles appear as an embarrassment. We distrust anything that does not have a “scientific” explanation. However, the problem is often not so much with Jesus’ miracles as with his claims. The question we ought to be asking is, “If Jesus was the one through whom the universe was created, would we expect his life to be different?” If he had the power to heal, and did not do so, then would we use *this* as an argument to dispute his claims?

Jesus himself claimed that his works were evidence that the Father had sent him. He urged both his disciples and his opponents to believe in him on the basis of these works if they found it difficult to believe on the basis of any other evidence (John 5:36; 10:37-38; 14:11). However, he studiously avoided performing miracles just for show or to obtain a following. John calls his miracles “signs” – signs of who he was and what he had come to do.

Bible Prophecy Supports His Claims

Exceedingly strong evidence in support of the claims that Christ made about himself can be found in the scores of Old Testament prophecies precisely fulfilled by him during his lifetime.

The fulfilment of many of these prophecies was completely beyond his control. He could not, for instance, have arranged to be born of the tribe of Judah, or as a descendant of David (Genesis 49:10; Isaiah 9:6-7; 11:1-10; Matthew 1:2-16). Nor could he have manoeuvred the events that led to his being born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Luke 2:1-7). Nor would he have arranged to be betrayed by a friend for 30 pieces of silver (Psalm 41:9; Zechariah 11:12-13; Matthew 26:14-16; 27:3-10); that his enemies spit on him (Isaiah 50:6; Matthew 26:67); that he be reviled while hanging on the cross (Psalm 22:7-8; Matthew 27:39-44); that he be pierced, but not a bone in his body be broken (Zechariah 12:10; Psalm 34:19-20; John 19:33-37); and that soldiers cast lots for his garments (Psalm 22:18; Matthew 27:35).

The chances of all these prophecies being fulfilled in one man are so overwhelmingly remote that it is strikingly demonstrated that they could in no wise be the shrewd guesses of mere men – Prof. J. P. Free.

His Influence in History Supports His Claims

Jesus has captured the heart and mind and allegiance of peasant and king, of intellectual and illiterate the world over. Wherever the message of this man has been proclaimed, among all races and cultures, people have turned from their own ways to follow him. His influence in art, music and literature is incalculable.

So much of what may be called “progress” has been done in his name: the abolition of slavery; the building of hospitals; the development of the nursing profession; the reform of prisons; the abolition of child labour; the care of orphans and the elderly; the founding of innumerable charitable organisations; the development of education worldwide; the ending of cannibalism and child sacrifice on several continents – the list goes on and on.

His influence has not diminished today. Historian Kenneth Scott Latourette observed:

Never has Jesus had so wide and so profound an effect upon humanity as in the past three or four generations. Through him, millions of individuals have been transformed and have begun to live the kind of life which he exemplified ... Gauged by the consequences, the events which have followed the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus have been the most important events in the history of man. Measured by his influence, Jesus is central in the human story – Kenneth Scott Latourette.

Christians claim that this influence stems not only from his life on earth, but also from his resurrection and continued activity in the lives of his people. If we deny this, then we are left with the belief that it all grew out of the impact of a mere three years ministry of this remarkable man, in an obscure corner of the Roman Empire, and that alone.

The Resurrection Proves His Claims

The previous arguments are individually powerful, and collectively present compelling evidence to support Jesus’ claims of divinity. But the critical evidence which clinches the deal is his resurrection from the dead. What better way is there for a man claiming to be God to prove this than by dying and then coming back to life again?

Jesus’ supreme credential to authenticate his claim to deity was his resurrection from the dead. Five times in the course of his life he predicted he would die. He also predicted how he would die and that three days later he would rise from the dead and appear to his disciples – Paul E. Little.

There is no getting around it. The evidence to support the reality of the resurrection is overwhelming.² The conclusion, therefore, is inescapable that Jesus was exactly who he said he was – the incarnate God.

It is certainly the case that it takes more faith to believe, against the evidence, that the resurrection did not occur, than it does to believe that it has occurred – Richard Riss.

I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better and fuller evidence of every sort, to the understanding of a fair inquirer, than the great sign which God has given us that Christ died and rose again from the dead – Thomas Arnold.

Implications of the Divinity of Christ

Jesus Christ is unique among religious founders. While they stressed the importance of their teachings, Christ focused on himself. He claimed to be the Son of God and the Saviour of the world – the one whose appearing had been predicted in the Old Testament scriptures. His claims are supported by his character and his teachings, the many miracles he performed in public, and by his resurrection from the dead.

The implications of the divinity of Christ deserve our attention. To ignore them, is to dice with our eternal destiny. The following are some of the more critical implications:

² See the article *Did Jesus Christ Rise From the Dead?* in this series.

- ❖ **It sets Christ apart from any other religious leader.** Jesus was not just a man; he was also God. And he was not just another god, or an angel, or some other spiritual being, but the one and only God – the Creator God of the whole cosmos. This makes Jesus superior in authority to any other religious founder or teacher that has every lived or will live. “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30). It makes no sense, therefore, to follow the teachings of ordinary people, or even of some lower spiritual being, when the Son of God has made himself available to all who call on him (Romans 10:13).
- ❖ **It means that we can know God.** Until Jesus, no-one could approach God freely and live (Exodus 19:9-25). Even Moses was only allowed a brief glimpse of him (Exodus 33:18-23). But in Christ, we have “the image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15). To see him is to see God (John 12:45; 14:9), and to know him is to know God (John 8:19; 14:7). Now we have a man “who is able to sympathise with our weaknesses” and “has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). Now we have a “great priest” through whom we can confidently approach God (Hebrews 10:19-22).
- ❖ **It demonstrates the great love that God has for us.** In sending his only Son into the world to die a sinner’s death in our place, God has demonstrated his great love for each one of us. He did this to provide a way by which we can be forgiven our sins, and so be saved from the terrible consequences of dying in our sins. “God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).
- ❖ **It means that we can trust the teachings of Jesus.** If Jesus was just a man, then we should be careful about believing everything he taught. No-one can possibly have all the answers or all the knowledge necessary to speak the whole truth all of the time. But Jesus was not just a man – he was also God. Therefore, he could say, “I am the Truth” (John 14:6), and we can believe him. John was referring to Jesus when he said, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1).

Conclusions

That the Son of God would chose to leave his place of glory in heaven to become a man, to be subjected to troubles and temptations as we are, to suffer at the hands of those he came to save, and to die a cruel death to pay for our sins, is beyond anything that we could ever fully comprehend. There was no precedent to this anywhere in history. None of his disciples could have thought it up, let alone convince anyone else that it was true. But it is true.

This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins (1 John 4:9-10).

If you would like to get to know Jesus Christ, this is what you should do:

- ❖ **Pray to Jesus.** “The Lord is near to all who call on him ... he hears their cry and saves them” (Psalm 145:18-19).
- ❖ **Read the Bible.** You should start by reading the whole of the New Testament, asking Jesus to help you to understand what you are reading.
- ❖ **Join a church.** It is vital that you find a church which holds the Bible to be the final authority in all matters of faith and practice for those who believe in Jesus Christ.

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Acknowledgments

The following sources were used in the preparation of this paper:

Is Jesus Really God? by Dick Tripp, published by Dick Tripp, 1996.

Christianity for Skeptics by Steve Kumar, Hendrickson Pub., 2001.

Bible quotations are from the New International Version, 1984.