

“Who Is Jesus?”

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John 1:1-3, 14

Who is Jesus? Some say that Jesus was a great religious teacher; others an esteemed prophet; and still others a great moral model! Many dismiss him as a liar or lunatic. But, millions hail him as personal Lord and Savior. Whatever way people respond, nobody can deny that he stands at the center of human history.

The biblical record says that Jesus was born to a virgin; lived a sinless life; taught throughout Palestine for some three years; was crucified; and then rose again the third day from the dead. In addition to the women followers and his disciples, St. Paul records that more than 500 believers saw Jesus alive after his resurrection. How could a mere man have lived such an unique life? The miracles Jesus performed; his death on the cross; his resurrection from the dead; and his ascension to heaven; all bear witness that he was more than merely a man.

In his book “Mere Christianity,” C.S. Lewis, an intellectual giant of the 20th century, makes this statement, *“A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic--on the level with a man who says he is a poached egg--or he would be the devil of hell. You must take your choice. Either this was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us.”*

This question, “Who Is Jesus,” has renewed importance in our day and times, when radical Islam is on the march for world dominance, when anti-Semitism is on the rise and when the Christian Church of the 21st century is enduring fierce persecution in many world nations, comparable only to the 1st century.

In such an hour, it seems to me that the present-day followers of Jesus need to be clear and convinced about who Jesus is and committed to his gospel and world mission. Christians believe that the Holy Spirit indwells each believer as the divine Advocate of the God’s word and will. The Scriptures are given for our guidance and encouragement. So, let us address the question, “Who is Jesus,” through the testimony of the Prologue of John’s Gospel

John introduces Jesus in chapter 1, verse 1 with three profound statements: *“In the beginning was the Word,” “And the Word was with God,” “And the Word was God.”* In this one simple verse, we have the most precise statement of the divine revelation of Jesus.

We see, firstly, that Jesus is Eternally God.

John begins his Gospel in an unusual manner: *“In the beginning was the Word...”* Whereas the Synoptic Gospels began their accounts within the historical context of the 1st century, John began within an eternal context.

Matthew traced the genealogy of Jesus back to Abraham, while Mark began the life of Jesus with the ministry of John the Baptist. Luke presented the story of Jesus' birth in the context of the political power of Rome, vested in King Herod of Judea and with a priest, Zachariah and his wife, Elizabeth who became the elderly parents of John the Baptist. The Beloved Apostle, however, transports us back before creation, before mankind and time itself to eternity: *"In the beginning."*

The word, translated *"beginning,"* is a time word for us, but not so for ancient people. Psalm 90:1-2 can help us to understand this word from a biblical view: *"LORD, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, Or ever You had formed the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God."*

The word *"everlasting"* in the Hebrew, literally means, "from one vanishing point to another vanishing point." As far as you can go back through generations and recorded history, from vanishing point to vanishing point, God was and is! What a majestic thought: *"Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God."*

John's use of the term *"In the beginning"* certainly appealed to his Jewish readers as a direct reference to the Book of Genesis 1:1 *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."* When you reach back as far as the beginning of creation, God already was!

John says, *"in the beginning was the Word,"* not *"is the Word."* The Word did not begin in the beginning. The verb, *"was"* is in the imperfect tense, meaning "continued action." In fact, the sense of the entire verse is "In the beginning, (i.e. of God creating the heavens and the earth), the continuing Word was with God and the continuing Word was God." Eternally, the Word was with God and was God, even before the beginning of creation.

Note John use of the word, *"Logos,"* from which we get our English word, logic! It occurs four times in verses 1 and 14: *"In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God...And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."*

Why is Jesus called the *"Logos?"* John identified Jesus with the *"Logos,"* in keeping with the mindset of his readers, both Jews and Greeks. To the Jews, "word" was something concrete and closer to what we would call "deed." What happens when God commands? The command is done. God said: *"Let there be light and...there was light."* (Gen 1:3) To the Greeks, however, the *"Logos"* represented the very soul of the universe. It was the rational principle, from which everything existed and made sense--the creative force of the universe. **Jesus is the Divine "Logos" who is Eternally God....**

Secondly, He is Equally God: *"... and the Word was with God..."*

"The word was with God," literally means "face to face" with God. This suggests that Jesus, the *"Logos"* is distinguishable from God, the Father, and from God, the Spirit. In these simple, yet profound words, John offers us a glimpse of the Divine Trinity. Jesus is: *"the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."* (vs. 14) This description of Jesus as *"the only begotten,"* expresses the eternal

union and intimate love-relationship between the Son and the Father.

Although the actual term, "trinity" is not found in Scriptures, the teaching is evident from its earliest revelation. In Genesis 1:26 we read: *"Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness."* The most common name for God given in the Old Testament is the Hebrew word, "Elohim," which has a masculine plural ending. The word is always used in the singular to mean, "God," not "gods." However it does allow for plurality within the Godhead! Jesus is co-eternal and co-equal with the Father. **He is both eternally God and equally God!**

And thirdly, He Is Essentially God. *"...and the Word was God." The Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth!"*

This means that everything that can be said about God the Father can be said about God the Son. Jesus is, in every way, God, in his incarnation of perfect and sinless humanity.

John states that his glory is seen as *"the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."* Apart from faith in Jesus, mankind has no perfect understanding of God or salvation. It is impossible for man to come into communion with the Father, except through the crucified, risen, and glorified Son. In Jesus only, man finds the full and final revelation of the Father. Thus, the glorified, ascended Jesus is the sinner's true and only God. **Jesus is eternally God, equally God and essentially God!**

From this divine revelation, the question, "Who is Jesus," is the most important that you and I can ever face. It is important, because Jesus asked this question of His first disciples before predicting his impending death and resurrection: *"Who do you say I am?"* (Matthew 16:15) It is important, because man's eternal destiny hinges on this question. In answering the question, it is important that our minds and hearts to be filled with the grace and truth of *"the only begotten of the Father."* As believers, we are to lift Him up in word and deed, so that others might believe through faith.

Let me conclude with the story of Thomas, one of the Twelve disciples (20: 24-29). Thomas was not with the other disciples when they met in a room on Easter Sunday evening with the door locked for fear of the Jews. Jesus came, stood in the midst and greeted them, *"Peace be with you."* The disciples were overjoyed to see the Lord. They then found Thomas and said: *"We have seen the Lord."* But Thomas replied: *"Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."*

Eight days later, Thomas was with the disciples as they meet in the same room with the door locked. Jesus comes again and says, *"Peace to you!"* Then turning to Thomas, he says: *"Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving but believing."* Thomas responded in simple faith: *"My Lord and my God."*

"My Lord" is a confession of the absolute sovereignty of Jesus. Thomas' expressed full submission to the risen Lord. But the second word reveals the true nature and character of who Jesus is. Not only "My Lord," but, "My God!"

Thomas bowed before the risen Jesus and said: "My God," confessing Jesus' Deity and worshipping him.

Note Jesus' reply: "*Thomas, because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed!*" Jesus was speaking through Thomas to you and me today: "*Do not be unbelieving but believing.*" May we today through heartfelt faith confess like Thomas who Jesus is: "*My Lord and my God.*" Blessings!