

The Real Jesus Christ

JESUS OF NAZARETH IS the central figure of Real Christianity. What Jesus did and said forms the basis of Christian teaching and the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the fundamental event from which the whole of the Gospel comes. To understand Real Christianity it is necessary to have some understanding of Jesus Christ.

Jesus never ruled any kingdom, never commanded any armies and never fought any battles. He was brought up in a tiny hamlet and never travelled more than 100 miles from the place of his birth. In spite of this he has had more impact on history than any other human being. Jesus is well worth investigating.

The Life of Jesus

Jesus was born in Bethlehem about 5BC. He began his ministry, the period in which he taught and worked miracles, in about 26AD, mainly in Galilee. He was crucified and rose from the dead in about 30AD in Jerusalem.

This was the period in which Judea was taken over by the Roman Empire, although Galilee was still governed by the Herod family. It was under Pontius Pilate that Jesus was crucified, in a forced alliance between Jews and Gentiles.

Capernaum

Small town on the coast of the Sea of Galilee. Many of the events in Jesus' life took place here, and this is where he returned after his various journeys to teach the Gospel to the people.

Cana

Jesus performed his first miracle here when he turned water into wine.

Nazareth

Jesus grew up in this tiny village.

Galilee

This is a region of the original kingdom of Herod the Great, ruled by one of his sons, Herod Antipas. Most of Jesus' teaching took place in Galilee.

Emmaus

Jesus walked here from Jerusalem with two disciples on the day of his resurrection.

Bethlehem

Jesus was born here in about 5BC.



Bethsaida

The capital of the kingdom of Herod Philip. Jesus taught here.

The Sea of Galilee

Some of Jesus' disciples were fishermen on the Sea of Galilee. Jesus regularly travelled on it in a boat.

The Baptism of Jesus

Jesus was baptised in the River Jordan. This event is so important that it is recorded in all four Gospel records.

Death and Resurrection

For much of his ministry Jesus visited Jerusalem at times of religious festivals.

On his last Passover there, Jesus was arrested and crucified. His dead body was buried just outside Jerusalem. On the third day after, Jesus was raised from the dead by God.

Jesus ascended to heaven from the Mount of Olives, which is on the east of Jerusalem.

Are the Accounts Accurate?

The accounts of the life and teaching of Jesus are written in the New Testament Gospels. These were written by Apostles or those who knew them. The accuracy of the Gospel accounts can be verified in many ways.

- Archaeological finds match the descriptions of people, places and events found in the Gospels
- Even tiny details in the Gospel accounts match other tiny details in parallel accounts.
- The linguistic features of the Gospels match the time and place of Jesus' ministry.

This shows the Gospels' detailed accuracy.

The Miracles of Jesus

The Gospels record that Jesus worked many miracles. He healed the sick, fed the hungry and overcame nature. The greatest of all the miracles was the death and resurrection of Jesus. The evidence that this really happened is strong. It includes an empty tomb and hundreds of eyewitnesses. The fact that one miracle happened shows that miracles are possible. Jesus is the person, above all others, that one would expect to show miracles.

The Sacrifice of Jesus

Jesus died for a reason. He was put to death because he was the Son of God, but his death also had the purpose of allowing God to forgive sins without being unjust. By becoming a part of Christ's sacrifice (which is the purpose of baptism) we too can have our sins forgiven, and having been forgiven we can receive eternal life.

Why Jesus is Important

Jesus is the one person alive today who has overcome death. His resurrection shows that he is approved by God and that his teaching is therefore to be trusted. Jesus said: "I am the way, the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except by me." (John 14:6) Jesus is our example and our way to God.

The Real Jesus Christ

The Claims of Jesus

Jesus claimed to be the Son of God. The New Testament uses this phrase 45 times to describe Jesus. Jesus himself stated that he was the Son of God:-

- *I said, I am the Son of God.* (John 10:36)
- *Again the high priest questioned him and said: "Are you the Christ, the son of the Blessed? Jesus said, "I am; and you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Mark 14:61,62)*
- *For he said: "I am the Son of God."* (Matthew 27:43)

Jesus Claimed to be The Son of God

Either these claims are true or they are false

Suppose the claims are false

There is another choice.

Either Jesus knew they were false or he did not know they were false

Suppose That Jesus knew

the claims were false

In this case, Jesus was telling a deliberate falsehood.

He would have been a liar.

Jesus was therefore immoral, and was a blasphemer against God. He was also a fool, because his claims led to his death.

There is no doubt that Jesus was an honest man. It is clear that he is of the highest moral character. He is the person by whom all other characters can be judged. He taught mainly by example.

Jesus was no Liar

This case fails

Suppose That Jesus did not know

the claims were false

In this case, Jesus was Deluded.

He would have been a lunatic.

Jesus was deluded into thinking that he was the Son of God when he was only a Galilean peasant. This would be insanity of a high level; Jesus would have been mentally ill.

One has only to read Jesus' teaching to realise that he is probably the sanest person who ever lived.

Jesus was no Lunatic

This case fails

Suppose the claims are true

We have only one choice

Jesus is Lord

We can only believe his words and accept his message. If Jesus really is the Son of God we must follow him.

This means that we need to find out about his teaching, accept it and use it to guide our lives. In fact it is to our benefit to do this.

The Trilemma

Given the absolute nature of the claims that Jesus made for himself, there are only two alternatives, the claims are either true or false. If they are false, then Jesus either knew they were false or he did not. This leads only three possible alternatives; Either Jesus was lying, or he was mad, or he is Lord. The first two of these are clearly absurd. Therefore we must conclude that Jesus' claims are true and his message comes from God.

Jesus is not God

A common misconception about Jesus, taught by many churches, is that Jesus is God. In fact the Bible does not say this and there are many scriptural reasons for believing that Jesus is not God.

- Jesus never claimed to be God
- No-one has ever seen God, but many people saw Jesus (1 John 4:12; 1 Timothy 6:16)
- Jesus did not know everything (Mark 13:32)
- Jesus was tempted (Hebrews 4:15)
- God is greater than Jesus (John 14:28)
- Jesus died - God cannot die
- Jesus himself had a God. He prayed to his God (Matthew 27:46). He spoke of his God (Revelation 3:12) and the New Testament consistently refers to the God of Jesus (eg. Ephesians 1:3,17)

The claim that Jesus is God is, in the end, destructive of Jesus' real purpose. Jesus overcame sin. God has no need to do this.

The Return of Jesus

After Jesus was raised from the dead he was taken up into heaven, where he now is. However, there are many recorded occasions on which he promised to return. The theme of the return of Jesus appears throughout the Bible. Well over 300 verses of the New Testament contain clear references to this event. When Jesus returns, he is to come in power. He will not be born as a child, but will return in power as king. He will rule the world, bring peace, prosperity and justice, and even raise the dead.

The return of Jesus is to take place at the end of human history. No-one knows when this will be. It may be centuries from hence, but it might be very soon. Jesus gave a list of events that is to occur shortly before he returns. Many of these have happened within the last century and the stage seems set for the last battle that happens at Jesus' return.

Jesus the Son of God

Jesus claimed to be the Son of God and that claim is repeated for him by the Apostles.

The meaning of the term "Son of God" is explained in Luke 1:35. Jesus is described as the Son of God because he has no human father. He was brought into existence when the Holy Spirit acted on Mary, his mother, who was at that time a virgin. Jesus is also described as the Son of God in Psalm 2:7 where he is described as the ruler of the earth on God's behalf.

Most importantly, the Son of God is able to show us what God is like. Jesus is described as "The Image of the invisible God" (Colossians 2:15) and the "exact image of God" (Hebrews 1:3). This makes him the closest representation of God that can be seen. We need to follow him well.