

LIVING WATERS NEWSLETTER

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WHO IS JESUS?

“The multitude answered him, “We have heard out of the Law that the Law that the Christ is to remain forever, and how do you say, ‘The son of man must be lifted up?’” (John 12:34. “Who are you, Lord?” (Acts 9:5).

Our first thought is it would be redundant to ask this question. However during his ministry on earth he was said to be “a gluttonous man and a drunkard” (Luke 7:34), a man who had “lost his mind and had a demon” (Mark 3:21-23; John 10:20), “Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets” (Mt.16:14), John the Baptist risen from the dead (Mark 6:14) and a blasphemer (Mt. 26:65, Mark 14:64), “Christ the son of the living God (Mt.16:16) and “Lord and God” (John 20:28),

Unquestionably he is the most controversial figure in history. No one has been more revered, disdained, analyzed, forsaken, admired, and misunderstood than the divine son of God from Nazareth. In the beginning of his ministry the first time he preached in his hometown they tried to kill him (Luke 4:29) and at the end of his ministry the religious leaders in Jerusalem did kill him. This being true we then should not be surprised today when he is said to be everything from a myth to God Himself. It is only in the scriptures that we can find the answer to “who is Jesus.” Therefore we will not give answers from any source other than the Scriptures, although there are volumes written giving various answers to the question, answers not found in scripture.

The answer to this question is not found in the creeds of the early Ecumenical Councils (325-787), although their conclusions (creeds) have been the bases of the church’s beliefs since the (approximant) year 325 AD when the Emperor Constantine, the first so-call Christian Emperor, convened a council of “Bishops in the town of Nicaea France. They at that time developed what is now known as the Nicaen Creed. This creed has become the basis of much “Christian belief, even held by “fundamentalist Bible believing” churches, and espoused and defended by most Evangelical and Catholic clergy. Much of what many churches that claim they “have no creed but Christ” and their faith and practice “based up on the Bible alone” actually hold tenaciously to the precepts set forth in the creeds that were given birth by quarreling “Bishops” and a Roman Emperor who knew little about the Scripture, and later developed further and finalized by such teachers as St. Augustine to the neglect of the teaching of the Apostles.

Neither is the answer to this question found in academic books of modern scholarship, some of which have been made into popular films hailed and praised by the general movie-going public. In these you will encounter: “Jesus as a political revolutionary, magician who married Mary Magdalene, a Galilean charismatic, a rabbi, a peasant Jewish Cynic, an anti-Pharisee Essene, an eschatological Prophet, a hippie in a world of Augustan yuppies, and as a hallucinogenic leader of a sacred cult.” It is remarkable that serious scholars could write such disrespectful and disgraceful answers to the question “who is Jesus.” Yet the gentle Jesus, meek and mild of Sunday school and Bible stories myth is just as unreasonable and reprehensible. He is not the

feminine looking, barefooted shepherd with a halo around his head as pictured by most medieval artist.

In order to answer the question “who is Jesus” we must begin in the book of Genesis. When Adam sinned God could have destroyed man and His whole creation and started over with His creation plan. He had put man in charge, and if there were problems then man had to solve them. However, man sinned and lost his ability to fulfill God’s purpose to have a man represent Him on earth. Since Adam had “handed over” (Greek: betrayed) “all this dominion” to Satan (Luke 4:6) and brought sin and death into the world, if God’s purpose was for man to have dominion there would have to be another man just like Adam to take his place. Thus we have the prophecy in Genesis 3:15: “I will put enmity between you (Satan) and the woman, and between your seed and her seed, he shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.” The Apostle Paul identifies this man as Jesus Christ. “The first man, Adam, became a living soul. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. The first man is from the earth, earthly, the second man is from heaven” (I Cor. 15:45, 47).

Jesus, then, was and still is a man, not a man described by Hugh Schounfield in *The Passover Plot* as “Just a man like every other man, who believed he was the Messiah.” Rather not a man born of an earthly father (Mt. 1:16) but a man who was “begotten by the Holy Spirit (Mt. 1:20) and called “the son of God” (Luke 1:35), yet a man “made like his brethren in all things” (Heb. 2:17). Jesus referred to himself as a man (John 8:40), Peter declares he was a man (Act 2:22) and Paul stated “There is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Jesus Christ” (I Tim 2:5), showing Jesus is still a man, A glorified man whom we “shall be like” (I John 3:2). The Scripture nowhere says that Jesus is God. He is always referred to as “the son of God.”

In the opening verses of two of his epistles, Ephesians 1:3 and II Corinthians 1:3, the Apostle Paul states: “Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Peter makes the same statements in his first epistle (I Peter 1:3). This is a new description of God. In the Old Testament He is said to be “the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” In these passages He is said to be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is not only anew revelation of God, but it says something about Jesus. He is not God, he is the Lord Christ. “Jesus” was the name given by the Father through the angel when he appeared to Joseph; “You shall call his name Jesus, for it is he who will save his people from their sin” (Mt. 1:21). Paul states that “God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus” (Acts 13:23). “Jesus” was the human name, divinely given, who was God’s anointed Messiah or Christ. Thus fulfilling the prophecy of Genesis 3:15 concerning the seed of the woman. God now has a man who is the “last Adam” (I Cor. 15:45) that will accomplish what the first man, Adam, failed to do.

Peter declares on the day of Pentecost that “this man, Jesus of Nazareth was put to death, raised again, and was exalted to the right hand of God” (Acts 2:22-23). He then states “God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified”

(ver. 36). If he were God why did God have to make him Lord? We do not make him Lord, he is Lord. Thus he is declared in Scripture to be our “Lord and Savior” (II Pet, 1:1; 2:20; 3:18). He is the Savior because of the cross (a crucified Christ). He is Lord because of the resurrection and ascension. He is both “savior” and “Lord.” To us he cannot be “Lord” without being “savior” but he can be “Savior” without being Lord” and this is not sufficient for salvation. In the Old Testament the word “Lord” is exclusively used of God. He is always “the Lord God.” In the New Testament it is used of both God and Christ, but also has a more common usage in that it is applied to anyone in authority. Generally when used to refer to Christ it would have been in this common Jewish usage of the word. But after the resurrection and ascension no one but God and Christ is called “Lord.” There are a few references where the word refers to a man such as I Corinthians 8:5 “there are many lords,” and I Peter 3:6 “Sarah called Abraham lord.” In Revelation 7:14 John uses the term in referring to an angel). If God “made him both Lord and Christ.” This means that the Lord God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has given to His son the status that only God occupied in the Old Testament. Now all things has been given to his Lordship. “He raised him from the dead and seated him on His right hand in the heavenlies far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and every name that is names, not only in this age, but also in the one to come and He put all things in subjection under his feet” (Eph. 1:20-22). In the book of Revelation Jesus declares himself to be the first and the last (I: 17; 2:8).

Jesus was the first man to be born sinless. If the prophecy in Genesis 3:15 would ever be fulfilled, it had to be accomplished by a sinless man. However, through one man’s disobedience “sin entered the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned” (Rom. 5:12). There had to be a man that could take Adam’s place and be able to forgive the sin that whole race had suffered because of Adam’s sin. As righteous as some were in the Old Testament, none met this criteria, because all had sinned. No sinful man could “crush” the head of Satan. Therefore, there had to be born a sinless man to fulfill the purpose of God. Thus Jesus, as “the last Adam became a life giving spirit” (I Cor. 15:45). Having been begotten by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, he was sinless. He had to be born of God in order to be sinless, otherwise he would have had the nature of Adam, a sinful nature. All mankind was under the curse of death and would have to pay the wages of sin with death because “without the shedding of blood there is no remission” (Heb. 9:22). By the virgin birth there was born a sinless man who could pay the debt for all. In the genealogies recorded in the Bible, it is always stated the birth of a son was born to the father, not the mother, but concerning Jesus it was declared: “Matthan begat Jacob and Jacob begat Joseph” but does not say “and Joseph begat Jesus.” Rather “Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ (Matt. 1:16). Contrast this with the announcement of John the Baptist: “Thy wife, Elizabeth shall bare *thee* a son” (Luke 1:13). There is no *thee* in the announcement to Joseph, rather “and she shall bare a son (Matt. 1:21). Jesus was not a son brought forth by Joseph but to the Father in Heaven.

Jesus was the first man to be raised from the dead, never to die again. All who were raised from the dead in the Old Testament and in the ministry of Christ and the Apostles had to die again. That which declares Jesus to be the son of God is his resurrection from the dead. Romans 1:1-3 “Christ Jesus...His son, who was

born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, who was declared to be the son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness.” His resurrection was the “first-fruits of those who are asleep” (I Cor. 15:20). The first-fruits means there will be more to follow. He is “bringing many sons into glory” (Heb. 2:10). Christians have “been predestined to be conformed to the image of His son, so that he would be the first-born among many brethren” (Rom.8:29). So Jesus was the first man to die and be resurrected to never die again. This same power that raised him from the dead will also raise his people (Eph. 1:19, 20; Rom, 8:11). If one man can be raised from the dead, then so can all men. This is the hope of the Christian...the redemption of our bodies. Romans 8:24-25: “Hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we eagerly wait for it” The only thing God has not yet given us is “the redemption of our body. Our hope, then, is not that “we go to heaven when we die” but that we will be resurrected in the last day in a new body. It is then that we will be “conformed to the image of His son.” (Rom. 8:29).

Jesus was the first (and only) man to defeat Satan. Recall the Genesis prophecy “He (the seed of the woman) will crush your (Satan’s) head.” The only man able to do this would have to be a sinless man, not under Satan’s control. Jesus was the only man that ever lived that met this criteria. Therefore, “The son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil” (I John 3:8). Also “He disarmed the rulers and authorities and made public display of them, having triumphed over them” (Col. 2:15). A poignant scripture dealing with this subject is Hebrews 2:14-15: “Since the children share in flesh and blood he himself also partook of the same, that through death he might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through the fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives” Mankind was held in “the fear of death” because the wages of sin is death, and there was no payment for sin until “God laid upon him the iniquity of us all” (Isa. 53:6). For the Christian there is no longer any fear of death because the wages that were owed has been paid. For this reason “there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, for the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death” (Rom. 8:2.1, 2). The head of Satan was crushed.

Not only is Jesus the “first” but he is also the “last.” Note: I Corinthians 15:45-49: “The first man, Adam, became a living soul. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual. For the first man is from the earth, earthy, second man is from heaven...Just as we have born the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.” There will never be another “Adam” that is, the head of another human race. However Jesus is said the “second” man (the only time he is said to be “second”). He is not the last man born to be glorified. He is “bringing many sons into glory” (Heb. 2:10).

He is also God’s last revelation to man. “God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His son” (Heb. 1:1). Theologians and commentators say Jesus was a “theophany,” that is, Jesus appeared in the Old Testament as a man and spoke the message of God. The Hebrew writer says it was in the “last days” that God spoke through His son. The essence of this verse is that God’s final revelation is His son, Jesus Christ.