

APOLOGIA

Finding Answers to Life's Most Interesting Questions

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3 WHO IS JESUS?

Sam the Skeptic says, "Sure, I've heard of Jesus but there are so many opinions about who he is and most people say he was just a great man who lived a long time ago. Others say he was just a prophet like Moses, or Abraham. So who exactly is Jesus?"



DISCUSSION

Why do people sometime become irritated when a Christian talks about Jesus Christ?

PART 1: THE PREINCARNATE CHRIST

A. Preincarnate

The Latin verb *incarnare* means “to make flesh.” “Preincarnate” refers to the time before Christ took on a human physical form. Christ always existed and there was never a time when he did not exist.

B. He was involved in creation

His activity as Creator	Scripture	This demonstrates his
He created all things, visible and invisible	John 1:3; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2	Power
All things were created for him	Col. 1:16	Prerogative
He now sustains his creation and holds all things together	Col. 1:17	Presence

C. He was likely the Angel of the Lord

The precise identity of the “angel of the Lord” is not given in the Bible. However, there are many important “clues” to his identity (Gen. 16:11-13; 22:11-12; 33:11-13).

There are Old and New Testament references to “angels of the Lord,” “an angel of the Lord,” and “the angel of the Lord.” It seems when the definite article “the” is used, it is specifying a unique being, separate from the other angels.

D. Christ was not a created being

Firstborn: The terms “firstborn” (Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:6) and “begotten” (Acts 13:33; John 3:16-18, KJV) can sometimes be misunderstood to mean that Jesus was a created being. The description of Christ as the firstborn of all creation (Col. 1:15) refers not to his temporal beginnings but to his supremacy and honor.

Begotten (KJV, NKJ, NAU): The term “begotten” (Grk. *monogenēs*) which in English means to procreate is better translated as “one and only” (NIV). Jesus is the “one and only” (unique) Son of God.

Son of God: In Jewish usage the term “Son of...” did not generally imply any subordination or procreation, but rather equality and identity of nature. Thus for Christ to say, “I am the Son of God” (John 10:36) was understood by his contemporaries as identifying himself as God, equal with the Father, in an unqualified sense.

PART 2: THE INCARNATE CHRIST

A. Seven reasons why Christ became incarnate

1. Christ became incarnate to _____ (John 1:18; 14:7-11).
2. Christ became incarnate to provide an _____
(1 Peter 2:21; 1 John 2:6).
3. Christ became incarnate to provide an effective _____
(Heb. 10:1-10).
4. Christ became incarnate to be able to fulfill the _____
(1 Chron. 17:11-14; 2 Chron. 6:16; Luke 1:31-33).
5. Christ became incarnate to _____ (1 John 3:8).
6. Christ became incarnate to be a _____ (Heb. 4:14-16).
7. Christ became incarnate to be a _____ (John 5:22, 27)

B. Jesus' birth and boyhood (Birth-Age 12)

Bethlehem: Jesus was born in Bethlehem; a town located about five miles south of Jerusalem, which was also the ancestral home of King David (1 Sam. 17:12).

C. Jesus' hidden years (Age 12-20s)

Nazareth: These years took place in the town of Nazareth (Galilee). What happened during this period is unknown (Luke, 2:40-52; Mark 6:3; John 6:42; 7:15). Jesus probably cared for his family since Joseph may have died in Jesus' younger days. He had four brothers and at least two sisters (Mark 6:3).

D. Jesus' ministry years (Age late 20s)

Jesus ministered in Galilee, Samaria, and Judea, beginning with his baptism (Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11), and followed by his temptation by Satan (Luke 4:1-13), and his first miracle of turning water into wine in Cana, Galilee (John 2:1-11).

1. Galilee: People in Galilee (Roman Province) were generally open to Jesus' teachings (except for Nazareth). It was in this province that Jesus performed most of his 33 miracles. The province of Galilee was a pleasant rural area with mixed Jewish and Gentile cultures.
2. Samaria: The province of Samaria was occupied by a mixed breed of people comprised of Jewish and Assyrian ancestry.

3. Judea: The province of Judea was the religious and the political seat of Israel, especially in Jerusalem. Of the three provinces where Jesus ministered, Judea (Jewish leaders) resisted him most, rejected his Kingship, and where he was crucified.

E. Jesus' disciples

Simon Peter	Fisherman, impulsive. Later became a bold preacher of the gospel.
James (son of Zebedee)	Fisherman, ambitious, short-tempered but deeply loyal to Jesus.
John	Fisherman, brother to James, ambitious but later very loving, the "disciple whom Jesus loved."
Andrew	Fisherman, Peter's brother, eager to bring others to Jesus.
Philip	Fisherman, had a questioning attitude.
Bartholomew (Nathanael)	Unknown occupation, very honest and straightforward.
Matthew (Levi)	Tax collector, was a despised outcast because of his occupation.
Thomas (the Twin)	Unknown occupation, courageous but doubtful.
James (son of Alphaeus)	Unknown occupation, not much else known about him.
Thaddaeus	Unknown occupation, not much else known about him.
Simon the Zealot	Unknown occupation, extremely patriotic.
Judas Iscariot	Unknown occupation: treacherous and greedy.

F. The characters of Jesus' time

1. Pharisees: A Jewish sect that accepted the written and oral law.
2. Sadducees: A Jewish sect that accepted only the written law.
3. Scribes: Interpreters of the Law.
4. Herodians: Supporters of Herod the Great.
5. Essenes: A Jewish sect characterized by asceticism.

6. Zealots: A warlike group that strongly opposed Roman rule.

G. Jesus' Passion Week (Age Early 30s)

Passion (Grk. *paschō*) means "to suffer." Key passages: Matthew 26:17-35; Mark 14:12-31; Luke 22:1-38; John 13:1-30; Matthew 27:45-61; Mark 15:33-47; Luke 23:44-46; John 19:28-37.

1. Sunday: Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem.
2. Monday: The cursing of the fig tree; 2nd cleansing of the Temple.
3. Tuesday: Olivet discourse; Jesus' authority questioned by the chief priests, teachers of the law, and elders.
4. Wednesday: The Sanhedrin plots to arrest and kill Jesus. Judas agrees to betray Jesus.
5. Thursday (Maundy): The Passover meal is held and the Lord's Supper is instituted. Jesus washed his disciples' feet, gave them a new commandment to love one another as he loved them, and identified his betrayer. Later in the day Jesus agonized in the Garden of Gethsemane.
6. Friday: Jesus is betrayed arrested and forsaken. Several mock trials are held, Jesus is brought before Pilate, and Herod where he is found innocent but is turned over to the Jews who had him crucified by the Romans. Jesus' body is placed in a tomb which was watched over by Roman guards.
7. Saturday: Jesus' body in the tomb.
8. Sunday: Jesus is resurrected. The tomb is found empty by several women, Peter and John.

H. Jesus' post-resurrection appearances

1. To Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9; John 20:14).
2. To women returning from the tomb (Matthew 28:9, 10).
3. To Peter later in the day (Luke 24:34; 1 Corinthians 15:5).
4. To the Emmaus disciples (Luke 24:13-33).
5. To the apostles without Thomas (Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-24).
6. To the apostles with Thomas present (John 20:26-29).
7. To the seven by the lake of Tiberias (John 21:1-23).
8. To a multitude of 500-plus believers on a Galilean mountain (1 Corinthians 15:6).
9. To James (1 Corinthians 15:7).

10. To the eleven (Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:14-20; Luke 24:33-52; Acts 1:3-12)
11. At the ascension (Acts 1:3-12).
12. To Paul (Acts 9:3-6; 1 Corinthians 15:8).
13. To Stephen (Acts 7:55).
14. To Paul in the temple (Acts 22:17-21; 23:11).
15. To John on Patmos (Rev. 1:10-19).

I. How we know that Jesus is fully God

The divinity of Jesus Christ is the most frequently and heatedly debated doctrine. Simply stated, the question of whether Jesus Christ is fully God is the issue that divides Christianity from all other religions and spiritualities.

1. Jesus displayed _____ (John 6:39-40, 54; 10:17-18; Mark 2:10; John 5:22).
2. Jesus possessed _____ (Mark 4:39; Mark 3:10; Luke 4:35-36; John 11:43-44; Matt. 28:18; Mark 2:8; John 2:25; Matt. 28:20; John 10:30; Matt. 26:63-64; John 5:18; 10:30; John 8:58).
3. Jesus' Messiahship is confirmed through _____.

J. How we know that Jesus is fully human

1. Jesus had a _____ (Luke 2:7, 40, 52; John 4:6; Matt. 8:24; John 19:28; Matt. 4:2; Luke 23:46; 24:39; John 20:25-27; Luke 24:41-43; 1 Cor. 15:42-49; 1 John 3:2; Acts 1:9-11).
2. Jesus had a _____ (Luke 2:52; Heb. 5:8).
3. Jesus had a _____ (Matt. 9:36; 8:10; 21:12-13; 4:1-11; John 11:35; Matt. 26:37-38; Luke 22:44; John 12:27).

K. Conclusion: Jesus is 100% God, and 100% man

This concept of the hypostatic or one-person union of the divine and human natures in one person is probably one of the most difficult concepts to comprehend. Nevertheless, they once again affirm the God of the Bible is truly the only living God, possessing attributes which only God can have.

PART 3: THE POST-ASCENSION MINISTRIES OF CHRIST

A. His present ministry

1. He is head of his body, the church. Jesus Christ now sits at the right hand of God the Father, co-equal and co-ruler with him. He formed the church body by sending the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost to baptize believers into the body (Eph. 5:26, 29; 6:4; 4:7-13; 1 Cor. 12:5; John 15:1-10; Acts 1:5; 2:33; 1 Cor. 12:13).
2. He is the Faithful Priest for his people (Heb. 2:18; 4:14-16; 7:25; 6:19-20).
3. He is preparing a place for us (John 14:1-3).

B. His future ministry

1. He will _____ (John 5:28-29).
2. He will _____ (1 Thess. 4:16-17).
3. He will _____ (Rev. 19:11-21).
4. He will _____ (John 5:22, 27; 1 Cor. 3:11-15; 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Cor. 4:5; Rev. 20:11-15).
5. He will eliminate _____ (1 Cor. 15:24; Heb. 10:12-13).

PART 4: JESUS' NAMES AND TITLES

NAMES	TITLES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus (H. <i>Yeshua</i>; G. <i>Iāsous</i>) means "YHWH Saves." • Immanuel (God with us). • Logos (the word). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christ (Messiah, Anointed One, King). • Lord (master, owner). • Savior (One who brings salvation). • Son of God (His deity). • Son of Man (His humanity).
OTHER NAMES AND TITLES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bread of Life. • Cornerstone. • Redeemer. • Prince of Peace. 	

- Alpha and Omega.
- Wonderful.
- Counselor, and more.

PART 5: FALSE VIEWS OF JESUS CHRIST

Many heresies concerning the nature of Jesus Christ were taught during the early church period. Why then should Christians living today be concerned with them? Because these same views have been embraced down through time and can be found in the ancient and contemporary heretical doctrines of Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormonism, Islam, and others. They must be recognized for what they are—unbiblical!

Jehovah's Witnesses: Jesus is not God. Before he lived on earth, he was Michael, the archangel. Jehovah made the universe through him. Jesus is not coming again.

Mormonism: Jesus is a separate god from the Father (Elohim). He was created as a spirit child by the Father and Mother in heaven.

Christian Science: Jesus was not the Christ, but a man who displayed the Christ idea. ("Christ" means perfection, not a person). Jesus was not God because God can never become a man or flesh. He did not die on the cross, nor will he be coming back.

Scientology: Jesus was not the Creator, nor is he an "operating thetan" (in control of supernatural powers, cleared from mental defects). Jesus did not die on the cross.

New Age: Jesus is not the one true God. He is not a savior, but a spiritual model, and guru, and is now an "ascended master." He did not rise physically, but "rose" into a higher spiritual realm.

Islam: Jesus was a sinless prophet but not the Son of God. He was not crucified.

Hinduism: Jesus is a teacher, a guru, or an avatar (an incarnation of Vishnu). He is a son of God as are others. He did not rise from the dead.

Buddhism: Jesus was only an enlightened teacher. Buddhists in Asia believe Jesus was an avatar, but not God.

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