

## **Jesus – both Man and God**

*Please note that this article is also available as an audio file if you wish to hear it read instead of reading it yourself.*

*This week's bible reading is from John chapter 1 verses 1 - 14.*

### ***Introduction***

The first chapter of John's Gospel is one of the more well-known passages from the New Testament, and it's usually referred to as the Prologue, meaning introduction or foreword, as these opening verses act as a sort of preface to his Gospel - setting the scene as it were, for what is to follow.

In these opening verses we're told three very important things. One, God has always existed; meaning there never was a time when God was not – "in the beginning, God" as John puts it.

Secondly, we are told that Jesus, whom John refers to as "the Word", was with God in the beginning, and indeed was God. Jesus and the Father are one, and share the very same nature, meaning they are both God.

Thirdly, Jesus, (the Word) became flesh, became a man, and, for a short time, lived amongst us. Therefore, Jesus was God in human form.

### ***God Incarnate***

This crucial fact, that Jesus was not just a good man, not just an inspired teacher or great prophet, but that He was in fact God Himself, living amongst us a man - this key point sets Christianity apart from any and all other religions.

This means then, that there can be no comparison to any other religious leaders or founder. Christianity is in a league of its own, because it is not a man-made. In Jesus, God Himself came down to earth to call us back to Him - to show us a better way of being human. God experienced life as we do. He knew betrayal, suffering and death – even death on a Cross. And He did it all for us.

So then, if all this is true (which it is!) then all our questions about life and death are answered in Jesus. For one thing, it means we are not alone in the universe. It means that this world does indeed have a Creator – we have a Creator. It means there is a reason for our existence and we do have a purpose, and now we have a new hope, because there really is life beyond death, a life beyond this one. And most crucially it means that you matter - you, me, each of us matters to God. He really does care for you. In God's eyes everyone is precious; all are loved and no one is insignificant. And God came down into this world, to tell you that Himself.

## ***Great Events***

I recently came across a list of the top 10 events, since 1945, that changed the world forever. It's the kind of thing that you sometimes come across online. The number one event on this particular list, was the discovery of DNA. I suppose few would argue with that. But, if we had to do an all time list, of great events that changed the world, the birth of Christ would have to be no 1, and by a long way, because nothing else comes even close. Indeed, as an event, it eclipses any other events in human history - it is beyond comparison.

Now if you disagree – and of course, you're entitled to - I would have to respond by saying, respectfully, that you haven't understood the significance of what happened when Christ came into the world.

I ask you honestly, how can the appearance of God Himself, living amongst us, as one of us, ever be surpassed, or even equalled? It can't. It's a totally unique event that stands alone in history. The greatest event since creation itself. It's that important.

## ***Just a Hoax?***

Now everything that I've said so far rests upon one crucial fact, without which, it all falls apart, namely that the man Jesus of Nazareth, really was God in human form. If He wasn't, then the whole thing is a sham and a hoax, and anyone who follows Jesus is just wasting their time. Because if Jesus wasn't God, then suddenly everything changes, the universe really is a cold, empty and hostile place in which only fate and chance rule. We ourselves become utterly insignificant and meaningless; and our world is little more than a tiny ball of rock, tucked away on the outer rim of the galaxy, a rock that will one day be destroyed when our sun eventually goes supernova, and that will be the end it; the end of humanity. Our own personal future is also empty, nothing but death and blackness awaits us all – our fleeting lives, pointless.

But, if Jesus really is God, then it follows that there truly is meaning and purpose to life. Because in Christ we have hope; we have the promise of forgiveness and salvation, and of life after death – if only we put our faith in Him.

## ***I Am the Truth***

So how can we know that this is all true - that God really was born as a man in the person of Jesus? Well let's go back to our reading from John chapter 1, and look more closely at what he says, verse 1:

*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...”*

Then in verse 14, he says:

*“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

John tells us that “the Word” – Jesus, “became flesh and dwelt amongst us”. Then, crucially he says:

*“We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

The point is this. John is telling us plainly, that he himself, personally witnessed Jesus in the flesh - God incarnate. He, John, was there. He saw Jesus with his own eyes. And, for our benefit, for all who would come to believe in Jesus, John wrote down everything he witnessed, so that those who were not there, might know the truth of what happened.

## ***A Valid Account?***

OK, you might be thinking, “but how can we trust John’s Gospel? How do we know it’s genuine and not just a fiction?” It’s a fair question, and whilst there isn’t time in this address to mount a full defence of the New Testament, suffice it is to say that the NT literature has been subjected to immense academic and historical scrutiny over the last 200 years, by both believers and non-believers, and has come through that process remarkably unscathed and largely intact.

And as for St. John himself, we do know that he was the beloved disciple, one of Jesus’ inner circle. He was with Jesus from the beginning and witnessed everything Jesus did and said. He was there at the Transfiguration, and the only disciple at the Crucifixion. He was one of the first disciples to enter the empty tomb following Jesus’ resurrection.

We also know what happened to John after the Resurrection - he moved to what is present day Turkey and staying for a time in both Ephesus and Smyrna. Eventually he arrived at the island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea where it is said he lived to a great age.

John’s Gospel is simply a record of his experiences as a disciple of Jesus. He even records a couple of events that occur after Jesus’ Resurrection from the dead.

You may choose to believe his Gospel all an elaborate fabrication, but the actual evidence doesn’t really support that theory, and it’s far more likely John’s Gospel is what it claims to be - one man’s account of the events surrounding the life of Jesus of Nazareth. In that sense it’s not unlike any other

historical document of its time; it's just that it's of special interest to the Church, because of the whose life it details.

### ***Conclusion***

In conclusion then, what I'm saying is this: the proof of who Jesus really is, that He is indeed God in human form - the proof is there right in front of you, if you happen to have a bible to hand. So if you want know that God is real, that you matter to Him; that your life has purpose and meaning; then the proof is there - if only you are prepared to look with an open heart and mind. Amen.