

Who Jesus really is.

No. 2 Jesus – the God who lived among us.

Bible readings John 1:1-18 & John 20:19-23.

I wonder what you think God is like? Have you ever looked in a dictionary to find the meaning of the word, “God”?

“god”, with a small “g”, is “A supernatural being, who is worshipped as the controller of some part of the universe or some aspect of life in the world, or is the personification of some force”.¹

“God”, with a capital “G”, is “the sole Supreme Being, eternal, spiritual and transcendent, who is the Creator and ruler of all and is infinite in all his attributes, the object of worship in monotheistic religions”.

“God” is also defined as “an oath or exclamation used to indicate surprise, annoyance, etc. (and in such expressions as “My God” or “God Almighty”)”.

Christians believe Jesus Christ was God in human history living among human beings. “The Word (the expression of God, who was actually God) became flesh and made his dwelling among us, ...”, John 1:14.

¹ Collins English Dictionary (Glasgow: Harper Collins) 1994. For all definitions on this page.

John, the author, continues to write a witness testimony: "... We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth", John 1:14.

Matthew and Isaiah describe the son born of a virgin as "Immanuel" meaning "God with us", Matthew 1:23; Isaiah 7:14. "God" being the sole, Supreme Being over all. "Us" being the human race. God came here! He truly did!

His birth was at least three things:

1. It was supernatural: there was no human father
2. It was a sign: it pointed to something unique happening
3. It was God the Son, the Son of God, on earth as a man baby – in some ways a stranger even to his family and his closest friends.

God called Mary to deliver a baby boy into the world so that one day the people of the world, including Mary herself, would be delivered from sinful rebellion against God by this very same son!

The theological term is "the Incarnation" (with capital "I"), meaning the in-fleshing of God. "God, without ceasing to be God, was made man".² The Bible does not investigate the metaphysical and speculative questions on the mode of the Incarnation – the how? the what? etc. It is content to clearly argue the evangelical issues of personal salvation through this Jesus.

² The Illustrated Bible Dictionary (Leicester: IVP) 1980, p.688-689.

Read **John remembering Jesus' words:**

“No-one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known”, John 1:18.

“If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.

Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us”.

Jesus answered, “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? **Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father**. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don’t you believe (*and here is the Incarnation defined*) that **I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me?**

The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, **it is the Father living in me, who is doing his work**”, John 14:7-10.

Notice the three descriptions of the Incarnation and incarnation I have put in bold type above.

Why would God be in-fleshed? Because “... God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life”, John 3:16.

Only flesh could save flesh. Man does not have flesh, man is flesh. Sin’s penalty is death. Only flesh can die! A second Adam came from God to

remedy the tragic disaster of humanity's sinful rebellion against God, caused by the first Adam.³

“For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, **the man Christ Jesus**, who gave himself as a ransom for all men ...”, 1 Timothy 2:5-6.

John's gospel gives us the understanding of the events described in Matthew and in Luke. Why did the angel visit Joseph and Mary?⁴ Why all the travelling to enrol for taxation?⁵ Why the miraculous conception? Why the virgin birth?⁶ Why the heavenly crowd of angels raising the eyes of common shepherds towards the skies?⁷ Why the shepherds running to see the sign of the baby Lamb of God in a manger?⁸ Why did Simeon praise God with the baby Jesus in his arms saying to God “... my eyes have seen your salvation”?⁹ Why did Anna explain all about the eight day old baby to the Temple crowd?¹⁰ Why did the wise men journey with gifts to worship the omniscient child Jesus in his house in Bethlehem?¹¹ Why all this?

The answer is in John 1:14. “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us”. Jesus is the *only* person who ever came from the Father in this sense. He was gloriously graceful and truthful. He was God himself. Once

³ 1 Corinthians 15:21-22; Romans 5:12,15, 19.

⁴ Matthew 1:20; Luke 1:26-28.

⁵ Luke 2:1-5.

⁶ Matthew 1:21.

⁷ Luke 2:13-14.

⁸ Luke 2:15-17.

⁹ Luke 2:28-32.

¹⁰ Luke 2:36-38.

¹¹ Matthew 2:1-2, 11.

and for all God became flesh and blood so as to be able to bleed for humankind.

We will now see five facts about Jesus, all from John's gospel. We need to learn and to live with these five facts. Just about the first words from Jesus to the assembled disciples after his death, burial and resurrection were

John 20:21:

"Peace be with you" (that's "salaam allekum" in the Arab world and in North Sudan today). "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you".

We learn these five facts about Jesus' incarnation today *because we Christians are sent into the world today to be the living Body of Christ where he has placed us*. We are to live lives that shout the fame of Jesus!

Five facts about Jesus in John: one eleven word sentence that reminds me – and should remind every Christian – of why I live today:

"The Son was sent to show, to save and to send". May be you can use the four fingers and one thumb on your right hand to remind you of these five key words?

1. the Son
2. was sent
3. to show
4. to save
5. and to send.

1. Jesus is the Son. Jesus frequently called God, “Father”.

At thirteen years old in the Jerusalem temple on pilgrimage with his earthly mother and his apparent human father, Jesus was separated from Mary and Joseph. He remained in the temple while they journeyed home. Perhaps they assumed he was with friends elsewhere among the travellers? When he was discovered later he told his anxious guardians, “Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?”, Luke 2:49.

Years later as an adult Jesus was in the temple courts. He drove out all of the buyers, sellers and money-changers saying:

“How dare you turn my Father’s house into a market?”, John 2:16.

According to John, Jesus is God’s single gene (Greek: monogenes) “only” son.¹² He is the “One and only Son” (NIV), “the only begotten Son” (KJV).

- “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 1:14
- “No one has ever seen God, but God the one and only who is at the Father’s side, has made him known”, John 1:18.
- “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life”, John 3:16.

¹² The Illustrated Bible Dictionary (Leicester: IVP) 1980, p.688-689.

- “Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son”, John 3:18.

As this unique Son, Jesus knew God with him and he knew God using his human life:

- “If I do judge, my decisions are right, because I am not alone. I stand with the Father who sent me”, John 8:16.
- “... (I) speak just what the Father has taught me. The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him”, John 8:28-29.
- “...The miracles I do in my Father’s name speak for me”, John 10:25.
- “My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand”, John 10:29.
- “I and the Father are one”, John 10:30.
- “In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you”, John 14:2.
- Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me”, John 14:6.
- Jesus answered, “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’”, John 14:9.
- “Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father living in me, who is doing his work”, John 14:10.

- “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener”, John 15:1.
- “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love”, John 15:9.
- “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name”, John 15:16.
- “All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you”, John 16:15.
- “I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father”, John 16:28.
- “But a time is coming, and has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me”, John 16:32.

Jesus always followed his Father’s initiative – never his own. He lived to glorify his Father (John 17:1,4). He did this by doing simply and only his Father’s will (John 4:34; 5:30; 8:28). He came in his Father’s name, as his Father’s representative (John 5:43). He perfectly showed his Father to all who would see (John 14:7). Jesus never did anything, or went anywhere, he could not be himself – that is, he could not be the God he really was.

Fact one: Jesus is the Son. And we Christians are born again as children of God too. It is a good idea to make these words of the Son of God our motto in life: “... I seek not to please myself but him who sent me”, John 5:30.

2. Jesus was sent by his Father. Forty-two times this phrase or something similar to it occurs in John's gospel – *God the Father sent God the Son for a purpose*. This is the reason “the Word became flesh”, John 1:14. In Jesus' own words,: “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work”, John 4:34.

- “He who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father who sent him”, John 5:23.
- “Whoever hears my words and believes him who sent me has eternal life”, John 5:24.
- “I seek not to please myself, but him who sent me”, John 5:30.
- “The very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me”, John 5:36.
- “The Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me”, John 5:37.
- “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent”, John 6:29.
- “I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me”, John 6:38.
- “And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me”, John 6:39.
- “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him”, John 6:44.
- “Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me”, John 6:57.

These are ten of many examples!¹³

Towards the end of his life Jesus declared: “I have brought you glory on earth (Father) by completing the work you gave me to do”, John 17:4.

From the cross he cried out in victory: “It is finished”, John 19:30. You can only finish a job when it is clear precisely what you have to do! Jesus the Son was sent.

I have a problem with many “so-called” Christians today who live purposeless lives. They are bored! They say they have no purpose. “What shall I do this evening?” “What can I do with my holiday time?”

Followers of Jesus have the same purpose as Jesus himself had! Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, Jesus was “sent” (the Greek is usually, though not exclusively, *apostello*). He was sent to save the world – and so are we!

As an older man John wrote: “And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his son to be the Saviour of the world”, 1 John 4:14.

We cannot die like Jesus did to save the world, but we can live like he did with that one goal in mind. Anything we cannot do while seeking to witness to and win the lost, *we should not be doing*. By their lifestyle disciples of Jesus are

¹³ See also John 7:33, 8:16, 8:18, 8:26, 8:29, 8:42, 16:5, 17:3, 17:8, 17:21, 17:23, etc.

different to everybody else. We are sent into the world to be different from the world. "As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you", John 20:21.

3. Jesus was to show off God in all his greatness. Around Christmas time plenty of people decorate their homes with fairy lights. There is holly, Father Christmas, bells, signs that shine "Merry Xmas" (I often think that "X = the unknown factor, as in mathematics!).

My Christmas 2004 TV Guide had 154 pages in it. On page 15 there was a quarter of a page of programmes generally titled, "The Spirit of Christmas". That pathetic percentage of 0.25% illustrates that my nation – the United Kingdom – has little clue about life as God intends it to be!

Real life is centred on Jesus, it does not relegate him to a hidden corner! We Christians must remember that societies' darkness is our chance to shine brightly. I need to be the best I can be in the place where God has put me – and so do you.

The older John wrote: "God has given us eternal life and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life", 1 John 5:11-12.

As a young fisherman John saw the glory of God in Jesus from Nazareth. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched –

this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared (the Incarnation); we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and has appeared to us”, 1 John 1:1-2.

John the apostle knew that because Jesus was sent he was sent as well. Consequently he wrote what he knew, so that anyone could read it. Like John we are also sent as Jesus was sent, to show God in all his greatness.

In John 14 Jesus says that God the Father and God the Son are one God, experienced together, both introduced by Jesus. Jesus was total God-ness in one complete and perfect man. Jesus was God as he had never been seen before. Jesus was infinity captured. Jesus was the Almighty constrained. Jesus was omniscience on occasion blissfully ignorant. Jesus was omnipotence significantly dependent on others.

One of the earliest Christian attempts at explaining this is found in Philippians 2:7-8. God the Son “made himself nothing”, “emptied himself”, was “found in appearance as a man”.

John’s gospel reads: “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 1:14.

Does your life advertise God well? Do people want Jesus because of what they see of him in you? Are you like Jesus in your character? Is Jesus obvious

in everything you do? Are you different to the world around you because you are a disciple of Jesus Christ? “As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you”, John 20:21.

4. **Jesus came to save.** According to John Jesus was light shining in the darkness, (John 1:5, 1:10). Jesus was unrecognised by the gloomy world. His own creation rejected him – the created and the chosen turned their backs on the one to whom they owed everything, (John 1:10-11).

God’s love was expressed by his huge donation to the world, (John 3:16).

God gave himself in human form – God the Son, given not to bring condemnation and judgement to people, but to save the world through him, (John 3:17). The word “save” (Greek *sozo*) means to preserve.

- Some people recognised this. The Samaritan townsfolk said, “This man really is the Saviour of the world”, John 4:42.
- Martha said, “Yes, Lord. I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world”, John 11:27.
- The Jerusalem crowd shouted – and some really meant it, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the King of Israel!”, John 12:13.
- At Jesus’ trial Pilate – seeming to recognise Jesus was from out of this world – asked: “Where do you come from?”, John 19:9.
- After Jesus’ resurrection Thomas said to Jesus, “My Lord and my God”, John 20:28.

- And John wrote his gospel "... that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name", John 20:31.

Who is Jesus to you? There is only one link, one corridor, one agent between earth and heaven, and he is Jesus! Jesus is God the Son, identified with God as the pre-existent Word, yet distinguishable from God as the son of Mary.¹⁴

Many Christians have too small a view of Jesus!

In John 17:2 Jesus is granted authority over all people so that he may give eternal life to every person his Father has given to him. Christianity does not depend so much on what you think of Jesus. It depends on *what he thinks of you*. Be aware of any undue emphasis on "me" in salvation. The "Master" is everything.

When Jesus prayed "Father the time has come. Glorify your Son, that the Son may glorify you", John 17:1, it was a prayer for the salvation of people through his saving act of substitutionary death.

"The very event by which the Son was being 'lifted up' in horrible ignominy and shame (on a cross) was that (one) for which he would be praised around

¹⁴ D. A. Carson, The Gospel According to John (Leicester: IVP) 1991, p. 96.

the world (throughout subsequent history) by men and women whose sins he had borne”.¹⁵

To glorify can mean “to clothe in splendour”. The self-emptying necessary for his Incarnation is reversed, as Jesus – God the Son – post Calvary – is restored to his pre-world creation glory within the Godhead.

- The Son
- was sent
- to show
- to save, and

5. **Jesus came to send** his disciples to spread the news of his salvation.

Christians know what we have to do with the rest of our lives.

“Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, I am sending you”, John 20:21.

If you know Jesus, show Jesus everywhere every day.

Since he died for you, live for him.

The world is in a mess and we have the message it needs.

Like Jesus, we will be rejected by most, but some will receive what we say.

Death is not the end. It is what follows death that is worth living for.

¹⁵ D. A. Carson, The Gospel According to John (Leicester: IVP) 1991, p. 554.

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us”, John 1:14. And this Word, Jesus, says to you and to me:

”As the Father has sent me, I am sending you”, John 20:21.

When you return to work after this year’s Christmas break, and colleagues say to you, “Did you have a good Christmas?”, you could respond:

“Yes. And I resolved this New Year to help Jesus do what he came for. Do you know what that is?”

God will bring others to faith through disciples of Jesus who are dynamically different from those around them. The Son was sent to show, and to save, and to send.

So let’s go!

by Colin Salter.

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