

Who Jesus really is.

No. 5 **Thinking about the Lord Jesus**. Bible reading Revelation 5:1-14.

Have you ever played that game where one person in the group says a word out loud, and all of the others have to reply quickly with the first associated word that comes into their minds?

For example, I say “black” – you say “white”. I say “life” – you say “death”. I say “river” – you say “Nile” (or “Thames”, depending on where you live!).

What comes into your mind when you hear this word: “Jesus”?

May be you think of the Christmas story: the nativity, the shepherds, the angels, etc. May be Good Friday, Easter, the cross and the resurrection. Perhaps you think first of Jesus’ miracles, his healings, or 5,000 hungry people being fed using almost no resources. It could be you think how he bucked the establishment, going against the traditional teaching of the ruling Scribes and the Pharisees. Or how Jesus recruited a rag tag army of followers largely from among the common people.

What comes first into *your* mind when you think of Jesus?

You may think of the pre-incarnate God the Son, being in heaven’s glory before creation happened. Alternatively, you could spring to mind a theophany from our Old Testament – where “God cannot resist appearing in history”¹, like:

- his appearance to call Abraham, Acts 7:2,3; Genesis 11:31-12:4 – whose faith learned to live with uncertainty. Abraham left behind a

¹ Stephen, Jonathan Theophany: Close Encounters with the Son of God (Epsom: Day One Publications) 1998, p.32.

comfortable familiarity when he was called to a definite uncertainty, and he obeyed.

- his appearance to comfort Hagar, Genesis 16:7 – a lady on the run with a challenging family situation.
- his appearance to Moses, Exodus 3:2-10 – at the burning bush, before Moses call to unbelievably tough and demanding service.
- his appearance to Joshua, Joshua 5:13-15 – before the battle of Jericho.
- his appearance to Gideon, Judges 6:11-18 – before the defeat of the Midianites.
- his appearance to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and the watching crowd, Daniel 3:16-28 – inside Nebuchadnezzar’s hot and fiery furnace.

What comes into **your** mind when **you** think about Jesus?

I want us to look now at the ultimate reality of Jesus. “Ultimate” means conclusive, highest, most significant.² These are the greatest and best factual concepts about Jesus that we can ever possibly know.

The last Bible book, Revelation, starts off: “The revelation *of* Jesus Christ” 1:1 in the New International Version. Some translations prefer “the revelation *from* Jesus Christ”, see New Living Translation or J.B. Phillips. Both are correct.

² Collins English Dictionary (Glasgow: Harper Collins) 1995.

“Jesus is both the source and the subject of Revelation”.³ The word “revelation” means uncovering – like pulling back the curtains to look through the window as the 6a.m. dawn comes. The Greek gives us the English word “apocalypse” – prophetic disclosure of momentous and shattering importance.

In England packets of cigarettes all carry a government required printed warning: “Smoking can seriously damage your health”. Driving along our motorways we see government signs warning “Tiredness can kill, take a break”. Let me warn you of something. In the book of Revelation we see Jesus in a way that could seriously challenge our spiritual sluggishness! Our lethargy will be lost when we see Jesus in as much of his glory as we can manage.

What comes into your mind when you think of the Lord Jesus?

I understand Revelation 1:1,2 to mean this: **Here is the way Jesus Christ really is, as God the Father first showed Jesus himself when asking him to pass it on to all of his servants.** Grasping this will give those servants a sure and certain hope for the future, irrespective of what is going on around them now.

It is an idea to read Revelation skipping over all the detailed imagery and action, and purely extract from it the descriptions it gives of Jesus! That’s what we are going to do now. The things we read we can then put into our minds to

³ Handbook to the Bible (Berkhamsted: Lion Publishing) 1973, p.646.

think about and meditate upon him. They are biblical thoughts – how we should think correctly about the Lord Jesus. Given time these thoughts will mature our thinking about him, about who Jesus is and what he is doing.

I have recently been in correspondence through our local newspaper the Western Morning News and their opinion columns. It has been about the person of Jesus. Someone wrote accusing me of “playing around with the word of God by setting forth Jesus as the deity”. I wrote in my starting letter “the most important questions anyone can answer are: Who was Jesus? Was Jesus actually God become man?”. I stated my own belief that Jesus was and is God. **Now let us see what Revelation puts into our minds as ways to think about who Jesus really is.** I’m going to share 15 ideas.

1. Jesus is the world super-power, 1:5. “ruler of the kings of the earth”.⁴ Never mind local, central or world government. Leave aside “power to the people”. Do not worry about the dominance of Khartoum, Cairo, Brussels, Washington or London. The Lord Jesus is the authority, the director, the real one who exercises government over our world and over our ways.

In 6:10,11 Jesus is called “Sovereign Lord, holy and true”. The sovereign is supreme. In the United Kingdom our elected parliament is technically belonging to our monarch. Every session of parliament is introduced by the Queen’s speech. In the speech the Queen says: “My government will ...”

⁴ All Bible quotations are from the New International Version, unless stated otherwise.

Unlike the UK system of technical and ceremonial niceties, our Lord Jesus is “Lord of lords and King of kings”, 17:14. He reigns supreme. Submit your life to the government of Jesus, so that it shows in your every day life. Honour him above all else. How do you think of Jesus?

2. Jesus is the great time keeper. Both the martyred and the living saints must learn Jesus is the great time keeper. “He is coming”, 1:7; “How long, O Lord?”, 6:10. We see a long term certainty beyond all temporary unknowns. Our hurry is never shared by our unrushed Master! He is never late. He is never early. He is so absolutely in total control. How do you think of Jesus?

3. Jesus has the real church in his grip, 1:12-20. Verses 12-16 describe a man of awesome appearance, with piercing eyes, strikingly pure white head and hair, dressed like an impressive person of dignity and influence of his day. He is top class. Jesus Christ the Lord. But, for our encouragement, we must also notice what is firmly held in his right hand. Verse 16 “seven stars”, explained in his own words, verse 20 “the angels or messengers (or representative delegates) of the seven churches”.

Seven means the complete number. The seven cities mentioned stand for the entire Christian church. Jesus has such a grasp of his church – and therefore of us for we are the church – we can know for certain that nothing happening to us escapes his interest. 2:1, “He holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands”. Here we see Jesus, the dynamic Lord, involved in the life and the ministry of his churches. Listen to

the repeated phrases of chapters 2 and 3, from the never ending, life-giving stream of his words. Jesus says: “I know”, “I hold”, “I will”, “I tell you”, “I have”, “I will come”. These are often repeated for slow learners like me! Jesus the super power has my life in his timetable and it is all going to schedule. How do you think of Jesus?

4. Jesus speaks true words that cut straight to the point, “ a sharp double-edged sword”, 1:16, 2:12, 2:16. Jesus’ word never fails to cut. It either cuts with the edge of salvation when it is taken on board, or it cuts with the edge of condemnation when it is ignored – filed away and forgotten in the pending tray! The same word always has this double effect. It can prune towards new life and in can excise dead wood for burning at one and the same time. Like a train that leaves the railway station on time: some people catch it while others do not. Different responses to the same train. How do you think of Jesus Christ?

5. Jesus is the starter and finisher of all that is important or significant. “I am the First and the Last”, 1:17; 2:8. The Greek letters “Alpha and Omega” 22:13, come from the beginning and the end of the Greek alphabet. Everything else is in between. Yes, there are many things in life. And we are all busy enough. But there are only a few *vital* things in life – and none more so than placing yourself into whatever it is that Jesus is doing. He is worthwhile. He is momentous. All he does is notable in eternity. Why waste your life doing only what a non-Christian can do?

My son John has just bought his own boat and is learning to sail. Sailors put their sails to catch the wind and then they are excitingly blown along. All true Christians live in the power and ability of Jesus. How do you think of Jesus right now?

6. Jesus is set apart from everyone else and is himself the standard and judge of right and wrong. He is “holy and true”, 3:7; 6:10. He is the “faithful and true witness”, 3:14. Jesus is accurate, specific; he is upright. Jesus can always be relied upon, like explorers trust their compass to point to magnetic north. Jesus is the template for quality control in our own lives. His pattern is our goal. We should conform to his image.

In 3:7-13 no condemnation was spoken of Philadelphia to whom this description “holy and true” was made. Perhaps they had learned that the weaker they were the better Jesus shone through them. They had little strength, but Jesus was everything for them. How strange that we often talk about building “strong” churches! Do we think correctly of Jesus?

7. Jesus is the lion-hearted innocent lamb. 5:5,6 “See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, a Lamb”. Jesus is the dominant principle in life. He does not resist when we wrong him. His regal role is submitted to the way of gentle victory. There is a contradiction in Jesus that is not a denial of himself but a declaration of who Jesus truly is. “The wrath of the Lamb” 6:16,17. He is a Lamb who can be righteously angry. Are you thinking correctly of Jesus?

8. Jesus was crucified long before Calvary! 5:6,12 “a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain”. 13:8 “slain before the creation of the world”. The English Standard Version and Good News Bible do not agree with this latter translation. The New International Version puts an alternative in the margin. The thought is right either way. Even if the translation is made that peoples’ names “are in the Book of Life before the foundation of the world”, at the very least it means that *the idea of* Jesus’ substitutionary atonement was from before the beginning of time. The human Jesus was as good as dead from the day of his birth. Calvary was always designed by God to be the crossroads of history. This is hot news! There is a cross on history – not just on a currant bun! The death of One sacrificial Lamb opened life with God to the world. All this God planned since for ever back. Do you think enough about the real Jesus? Will you do so from now?

We could say more!

9. Jesus is our guide and keeper. 7:17, “the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd”. He and his way alone meet every need we ever have.

10. Jesus is the winner! 11:15, “the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever”. Jesus has punched the air and done his victory somersault. The gold medal is around his neck.

11. **Jesus is the absolute boss!** 12:10, "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ". He has authority – the power and the right to judge and to control others.

12. **Jesus is the star of glory!** In 21:22 John wrote, "I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple". Jesus is the centre of worship. There is no temple in heaven. Why would we need the symbols when the reality is present? The singing, the shouting, the trumpet blasting of heaven – and it is going to be loud (trace the loudness through Revelation: 5:2, 6:1, 7:2, 7:10, 8:13, 10:13, 11:15, 18:2) – will be like a sports crowd or a pop concert audience lauding and applauding. The chant will be "JESUS! JESUS! JESUS!"

Jesus is the star of glory and he is called from his own lips "the bright Morning Star", 22:16. Jesus is far bigger than stars of film screen, sports arena or stage. The world may fear terrorism, nuclear war, ecological meltdown. But the Bible teaches our darkness of a long night is about to end, and a day without shadows or end is about to dawn. How do you think of the brilliant Jesus?

13. **Jesus is permanent.** 22:16, "The root and offspring of David". Jesus lived long after King David in history but he lived well before King David in eternity. David was produced by him, and centuries later David's descendant produced the baby Jesus! There's nothing and no-one who can be counted upon like Jesus! What do you think of him?

14. Jesus is making a comeback! 1:1, “What must soon take place”. 1:7, “Look he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him”. When some people make a comeback in their chosen careers they may not quite reach their former peak. Jesus will exceed his previous life on earth when he returns. Not just a few healings in Palestine, but *no more* sickness or pain! Not comfort for a grieving mother or sisters, but wiping *every single last* tear drop away!

22:7,12,20, “I am coming soon”, repeated three times in the last chapter of God’s final written word to us. You and I know the conclusion of history! It is told us in Revelation.

Which brings us to the last of my fifteen of Revelation’s suggestions for ways to think of Jesus.

15. Jesus is the one who popped the question! Did you know you may be going to a wedding later this year? 19:7,8; 21:2; 21:9, all tell of this wedding of Jesus and his bride. This wedding you are going to is no ordinary one for you. You and I – if we are Christians – make up the bride! Jesus is the one who popped the question. He has invited us to be with him. To be close to him. To be one with him. He has invited us to be one only with him and with no-one else. Sadly, modern divorce rates only serve to spoil this picture.

And this wedding is all planned. We do not know the date. But it will be a celebration for all the world. Every nationality will be represented. All the friends of Jesus – from day one to the last judgement day – will be at his Father's home for the fabulous reception. There is no need to worry about the clothing side, feeling out of place etc. We will see Jesus as he is and we will be changed to be like him!

19:6,7 "Hallelujah! For the Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come and his bride has made herself ready".

So, how do you think about Jesus? What comes into your mind when someone mentions his name? **We sometimes get so discouraged and down, despairing and doubtful – because we are looking at the wrong things, in the wrong direction.**

From Revelation we have noticed:

1. Jesus is the world super power
2. Jesus is the great time keeper
3. Jesus has the real church in his grip.
4. Jesus speaks true words that cut straight to the point
5. Jesus is the starter and finisher of all that is significant
6. Jesus is set apart from everyone else and is himself the standard and judge of right and wrong
7. Jesus is the innocent lion-hearted lamb

8. Jesus was crucified long before Calvary, in the Father's plan
9. Jesus is our guide and keeper
10. Jesus is the winner
11. Jesus is the absolute boss
12. Jesus is the star of glory
13. Jesus is permanent
14. Jesus is making a certain comeback
15. Jesus is the one who popped the question to us: "Will you be in my
bride on that day"?

May God help us to think of Jesus as we really should **and** to be ready to be
at one with him on that day.

by Colin Salter.

Original message 25th January 2004; this one revised 27th September 2007.
Part of a series: "Who Jesus really is".