

Life and Teaching of Jesus Christ

Lectures 8 & 9

Jesus Christ: Who is He?

Introduction

In our study of the Life and Teaching of Jesus, without doubt the most fundamental and important question of all is: Who is Jesus Christ? What does the Bible as God's inspired and authoritative revelation say concerning this Person/Man called "Jesus of Nazareth?" Who does Jesus Himself say He is? And what witness do others give concerning Him?

Everything that Jesus said, everything He did, revealed God to those who had ears to hear and eyes to see – to those who listened, saw and responded in faith – through His words and the totality of His life and ministry from start to finish, e.g. how He responded to people, His attitudes in every conceivable situation, also His miracles, revealed God's nature, God's power, and God's Being.

The Bible makes this point unmistakably clear in Heb.1:1-3; Col.1:15; John 1:14,18. To know Jesus was to know God. To hear Jesus' words was to hear the voice of God. In every sense of the word, Jesus was God – God's Son, living on earth, on God's mission, calling people to know Him and believe that He had come down from the Father in order that they would be saved (Luke 19:10; cf. John 6:38-40).

There is no other way to know Jesus in truth than to know Him as He is revealed through God's Word. There were many different human accounts of Jesus' life and works, and to this day there are many human opinions about who He was that many people in their ignorance and blindness have believed wholeheartedly – none of which are true no matter how appealing and convincing these opinions may sound.

Of all the topics in our study, let it be reiterated: none is more than important both for ourselves and for our Gospel ministries than this topic: Who is Jesus? *He* is our Gospel. *He*, Himself, is the Good News – see Mark 1:1; Acts 8:12; 8:35; 10:36; 11:20; 17:18; 2 Cor.11:4; 2 Thess.1:8; 2 Tim.2:8.

The thrust of the four Gospel accounts is to give trustworthy witness to the Person of Jesus Christ *so that* their readers might put their wholehearted trust in Him. See Luke 1:4; cf. John 20:31. Faith begins with hearing the truth (Rom.10:17) such as presented in the Gospel of Luke, listening (heeding) to it, understanding it, and then committing oneself to the Person Who is at the very heart or core of these Gospel accounts.

True Christian faith is never reduced to reading and studying and understanding creedal statements (eg The Apostles' Creed) or confessions of faith (eg Westminster Confession of Faith). Rather true faith (sometimes formalised in such creedal or confessional statements), established upon the firm foundation of the truth as revealed in the Bible, is fundamentally about experiencing a living encounter with the PERSON of Jesus Christ, cf. Paul's experience: initially knowing Him only "*from a worldly point of view*" (2 Cor.5:16); then meeting Him face to face on the road to Damascus – Acts 9:3-6; cf. 1 Cor.9:1.

The Gospels therefore bear the clearest possible witness to the Man/Person known as "Jesus of Nazareth," a witness that we need to diligently study, understand, *and* believe *so that* we also might have life through believing in (lit. "*into*") Him (John 3:36; 5:24) and also have confidence to proclaim these truths to others "*with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction*" (1 Thess.1:5; also 1 Cor.2:1-5).

1) The witness of many concerning Jesus:

- The witness of God the Father:
 - "*You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.*" At His baptism: 3:22
 - "*This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him.*" At His transfiguration: 9:28-36 – v.35 (The Greek word "Son" used of Jesus is not used to describe God's sons or children)
- The witness of Gabriel & the angels:
 - "*JESUS*"¹: 1:31; cf. Matt.1:21
 - "*Son of the Most High God*": 1:32
 - King – "*throne,*" "*reign*" & "*kingdom*": 1:32-33

- “*Son of God*”: 1:35; cf. 3:38
- “*Saviour*”: 2:11a; cf. 2:30
- “*Christ the Lord*”: 2:11b; 22:67-69
- The witness of Simeon:
 - “*A light for revelation to the Gentiles...*” (non-Jewish peoples or ethnic groups / nations): 2:32a; cf. Is.42:1-6,13-16
 - “... *and for glory to your people Israel*”: 2:32b
- The witness of Jesus’ disciples:
 - “*Lord*”: Luke 5:8; 10:17; 11:1; 19:8; 24:30-34 cf. Luke 6:46; 9:59,61
 - “*The Christ*”: 9:18-21
- The witness of the Roman centurion:
 - “*A righteous man*” / “*son of God*”: “*Surely this was a righteous man.*” Luke 23:47 (cf. Mark 15:39 “*Surely this man was the Son of God!*”)
- Cf. the witness of evil spirits:
 - “*The Son of God*”: “*Moreover, demons came out of many people, shouting, ‘You are the Son of God!’ But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew he was the Christ.*” 4:41; cf. Mark 1:23-27,34

2) The witness of Jesus concerning Himself:

- Son of Man: 5:24; 6:5; 9:22, 26 etc.
- Lord: “*The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.*” Luke 6:5; cf. 19:31; 20:41-44; Phil.2:9-11
- Son of God: “*They all asked, ‘Are you then the Son of God?’ He replied, ‘You are right in saying I am.’*” (22:70)
- Messiah: 9:20-21
- Bridegroom: 5:33-35; cf. Matt.25:1-13
- King: 19:11-29 (parable); 19:37-40; 23:2-3,37-38

Conclusion

There are MANY other passages in the Gospels that speak of the wonder and glory of the Person, Jesus. Among the most well known are the “I AM” sayings in John’s Gospel – all of them are connected inseparably with God’s revelation of Himself to Moses and

His OT people “I AM THAT I AM” = His holy name, Yahweh, that later was given to the ascended and glorified Jesus (Phil.2:9-11) – in other words, JESUS IS GOD.

Ultimately Who Jesus is – even with such a great number of witnesses to the glory and perfections of this Person – leads to another question: What response do we give to this witness?

No person can come face to face with all this evidence concerning Jesus and remain neutral or undecided. A decision or response must inevitably be given: *for or against* the witness of this biblical witness.

These early disciples lived alongside of Jesus in every possible circumstance for three years, walking with Him along the dusty roads of Palestine, observing His life under every possible pressure and stress. They were “eye-witnesses” to all that took place, all that Jesus said, all He did. They were down-to-earth, earthy men. Not “yes” men. They did not leave for us a portrait of Jesus that paints Him with a halo or as a weak and fragile human being. Rather the witness that they have left us is powerful, convincing, accurate and true. It has stood the test of time.

Our faith, therefore, is not based on shallow or superficial evidence but on the strongest possible foundation. But despite the strength of the evidence, the evidence needs to be accepted and acted upon. Faith in the foundations is active faith which involves taking a step of faith to accept His Word and follow Him, even if with our minds it is not possible for us to understand all that Jesus taught or did. But in believing, God’s Spirit gives us the assurance in our spirits that Jesus is the Truth, that the witness given by the Gospels is not “myth” or “fantasy” but reliable fact.

Though it may not be the ultimate proof but a supporting proof to the truth, the evidence of changed lives of the many who for many centuries and all over the world were radically turned around through placing their hope and faith in Jesus must be taken with utmost seriousness.

We could also spend time reflecting, listening either to Jesus’ words, his heart, his vision as these are reflected through the different aspects of His daily life and ministry – how He related with people, related with His Father in prayer. (We will see more of these as

we study the context of various aspects of Jesus' teaching, eg Jesus' attitude towards women, children, foreigners etc.)

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