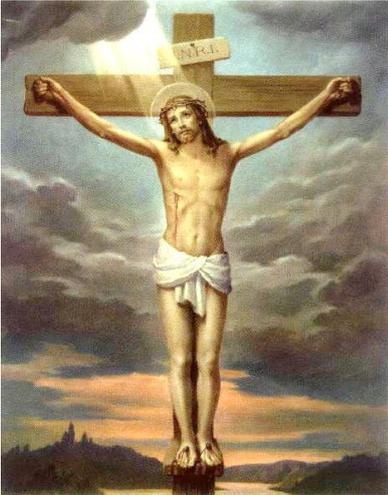


The Real Jesus



True Christian faith is centred around the work of the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. His life, death and resurrection form the basis for God's plan of salvation.

It is vital to understand the real reason for Jesus Christ, his true status as Son of God and how we can benefit from his work. Jesus prayed to His Father just before his cruel death:

"This is eternal life, that they (true believers) may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent" (John 17:3).

So this very clearly tells us, that in order to have 'ETERNAL LIFE' we must "know" who the "only true God" is and who "Jesus Christ" is.

The Virgin Birth

Over 2000 years ago the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary with this message:

"You will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest...Then Mary said to the angel, How can this be, since I do not know a man? [i.e. she was a virgin]. And the angel answered and said to her, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:31-35).

Through the Holy Spirit (God's breath/power) acting upon her, Mary conceived Jesus while still a virgin. Thus Joseph was not the true father of Jesus. Without the Holy Spirit acting upon the womb of Mary, Jesus, the Son of God, could not have come into existence.

Jesus was "begotten" by God (John 3:16), rather than created as Adam was originally. This explains the closeness of God's association with Jesus and also helps explain his natural aptitude for the ways of God his Father.

Christ's Place In God's Plan

God had a complete plan formulated right from the beginning of creation (John 1:1). His desire to have a Son was in His plan from the beginning. The Old Testament reveals different aspects of God's plan of salvation in Christ; from the promises to the Jewish fathers, to the prophecies of the prophets and the types of the Law of Moses.

Christ existed in God's mind and purpose from the beginning, although he only came into existence physically through his birth of Mary.



Hebrews 1:4-7, 13,14, stress that Christ was not an angel; whilst in his mortal life he was

less than angels (Hebrews 2:7), he was exalted to a far greater honour than them seeing he was God's "only begotten Son" (John 3:16). The Apostle Peter sums up the position:

Christ "was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times" (1 Peter 1:20).

Jesus was the central pivot of the Gospel:

God "had promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:1-4).

This summarizes the history of Christ:

- Promised in the Old Testament - i.e. in God's plan;
- Created as a physical person through the virgin birth, as a seed of David;
- Due to his perfect character ("the spirit of holiness"), shown during his mortal life He was resurrected;
- Publicly declared to be the Son of God by the apostles' spirit-gifted preaching.

The Foreknowledge Of God

God has complete 'foreknowledge'. We will be greatly helped in appreciating how fully Christ was in God's mind at the beginning, while not physically existing, if we can come to terms with the fact that God knows all things which will occur in the 'future'. God can therefore speak and think about things which do not exist, as though they do:

God "calls those things which do not exist as though they did" (Romans 4:17).

He declares "the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure" (Isaiah 46:10).

Because of this, God can speak of the dead as if they are alive, and can speak of men as if they were alive before birth.

The "counsel", or word of God, had prophesied Christ from the beginning; he was always in God's purpose or "pleasure". It was therefore certain that at some time Christ would be physically born; God would fulfill His stated purpose in Christ.

Biblical Hebrew has a 'prophetic perfect' tense, which uses the past tense to describe future things which God has promised. Thus David said, "This is the house of the Lord God" (1 Chronicles 22:1), when as yet the temple was only promised by God.

Scripture abounds with examples of God's foreknowledge. God was so certain that He would fulfil the promises to Abraham, that He told him: "To your descendants I have given this land..." (Genesis 15:18) at a time when Abraham did not even have descendants (see

also Genesis 17:5).

Christ was spoken of as existing from the beginning in God's mind and plan, although physically he could not have done so. He was "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8). Jesus did not die then literally; he was the "Lamb of God" sacrificed about 4,000 years later on the cross (John 1:29; 1 Corinthians 5:7).

In the same way as Jesus was chosen from the beginning (1 Peter 1:20), so were the believers (Ephesians 1:4; the same Greek word for "chosen" is used in these verses).

We cannot easily imagine how God operates outside of the concept of time. 'Faith' is the ability to look at things from God's viewpoint, without the constraints of time.

Differences Between God And Jesus

There is a fine balance to be drawn between those passages which emphasize the degree to which "God was in Christ" (eg. 2 Corinthians 5:19), and those which highlight his humanity. The latter group of passages makes it impossible to justify from the Bible the idea that Jesus is God Himself.

One of the clearest summaries of the relationship between God and Jesus is found in 1 Tim. 2:5:

"There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."

Reflection upon the highlighted words leads to the following conclusions:

- The Father is God. (1 Corinthians 8:6, Isaiah 63:16; 64:8).
- In addition to this one God, there is the mediator, the man Christ Jesus - "...and one mediator...", indicating a difference between Christ and God.
- "Mediator" means that Christ is a go-between. A mediator between sinful man and sinless God cannot be sinless God Himself; it had to be a sinless man, of sinful human nature - "the man Christ Jesus".

The Nature of Jesus

The word 'nature' refers to what we naturally, fundamentally are. The Bible speaks of only two natures - that of God, and that of man. By nature God cannot die, be tempted etc. Christ was not of God's nature during his life, he was totally of human nature. It was vital that Christ was tempted like us (Hebrews 4:15), so that through his perfect overcoming of temptation he could gain forgiveness for us.

The wrong desires, which are the basis of our temptations, come from within us (Mark 7:15-23), from within our human nature (James 1:13-15). It was necessary, therefore, that Christ should be of human nature so that he could experience and overcome these temptations:

"As the children (us) are partakers of flesh and blood (human nature), he (Christ) also himself likewise took part (i.e. "partook", R.S.V.) of the same (nature); that

through death he might destroy...the devil...For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the (nature of the) seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest... to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted"(Hebrews 2:14-18 K.J.V.).

This passage emphasises the fact that Jesus had human nature: "He also himself likewise" partook of it (Hebrews 2:14). This phrase uses three words all with the same meaning, just to drive the point home. Christ was the seed of Abraham (2:16), who had come to bring salvation for believers. In every way he had "to be made like unto his brethren" (2:17) so that God could grant us forgiveness through Christ's sacrifice.

Forgiveness

Whenever baptized believers sin, they can come to God, confessing their sin in prayer through Christ (1 John 1:9); God is aware that Christ was tempted to sin exactly as they are, but that he was perfect, overcoming that very temptation which they fail. Because of this, "God for Christ's sake" can forgive us (Ephesians 4:32 KJV):

"God. by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3).

"Sin" refers to the natural proneness to sin which we have by nature. We continue to sin, and "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). To get out of this predicament, man needed help. God therefore intervened and gave us His own Son, who had our "sinful flesh", with all the promptings to sin which we have. Unlike every other man, Christ overcame every temptation.

The Humanity Of Jesus

The Gospel records show how completely Jesus had human nature. He was weary, and had to sit down to drink from a well (John 4:6). "Jesus wept" at the death of Lazarus (John 11:35). Most supremely, the record of his final sufferings should be proof enough of his humanity: "Now my soul is troubled", he admitted as he prayed for God to save him from having to go through with his death on the cross (John 12:27). He "prayed, saying, O my Father, if it is possible, let this cup (of suffering and death) pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will" (Matthew 26:39).

From childhood "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature (i.e. spiritual maturity, cp. Ephesians 4:13), and in favour with God and men" (Luke 2:52, see also 2:40). This shows Christ's physical growth as being parallel to his spiritual development.

Obedience to God's will is something which we can all learn over a period of time. Christ also had to go through this process of learning obedience to his Father:

"Though he was a Son, yet he learned obedience by the things which he suffered. and having been perfected [i.e. spiritually mature], he became the author of eternal salvation" (Hebrews 5:8,9; see also Phil. 2:7,8).

Jesus had to make a conscious, personal effort to be righteous; he was not forced by God,

which would have resulted in him being a mere puppet. Jesus truly loved us, and gave his life on the cross from this motive. The constant emphasis upon the love of Christ for us would be hollow if God forced him to die on the cross (Ephesians 5:2,25; Revelation 1:5; Galatians 2:20). That Jesus did have the option whether to obey or not, makes us able to appreciate his love, and to form a personal relationship with him.

It was because of Christ's willingness to voluntarily give his life, that God was so delighted with him:

"Therefore my Father loves me, because I lay down my life. No man takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself" (John 10:17,18).

What Does This Mean For Me?

Salvation depends upon a correct understanding of the real Jesus Christ (John 3:36; 6:53; 17:3). Once we have come to this true understanding of his conquest of sin and death, we can be baptized into him in order to share in this salvation.

The Lord Jesus can become real to us in our common, everyday lives because He too faced the temptations we face. We can really believe that forgiveness is possible through the work of such a representative; his example can be a living inspiration to rise above our lower nature.

Appreciating the doctrines of salvation through Christ enables us to pray acceptably; "we have boldness and access with confidence by the Faith"- not just 'by faith', but as a result of the Faith (Ephesians 3:12 KJV). After being baptized into Christ we can come boldly before God's throne in prayer, with a true heart and clear conscience (Hebrews 4:16).

This "boldness" will be reflected in our being 'bold' in our witness (2 Corinthians 3:12; 7:4). 'Boldness' characterized the early church (Acts 4:13,29,31; Philippians 1:20).

God existed from infinity, and yet only 2,000 years ago He gave His only and His begotten Son. And that Son was a human being in order to save humans - only a few million of us (if that), who lived in a 6,000-year time span. That the only Son of God should die for a very few of us here, we who crawl on the surface of this tiny planet for such a fleeting moment of time, is wondrous indeed.

Christ died so that God could work out our salvation. The love of God for us is likened to a young man marrying a virgin (Isaiah 62:5) with all the intensity and joyful expectation and lack of disillusion. And more than this. Jesus Christ died for you, in the shameful way that He did. When this is fully appreciated we are left in total wonder and gratitude of God's love.

The Trinity - Unscriptural

The Bible's clear teaching about Christ gives no support for the doctrine of the Trinity (symbolised in the photo on the right). Consider the following:

- Luke 1:31-35: Jesus would be the Son of God. Note the many future tenses in these verses. Jesus did not pre-



exist before his birth of Mary.

- John 3:16: Jesus was the "only begotten Son" of God. He 'began' when he was 'conceived' (idea of beginning, Luke 1:31) in Mary's womb. If Jesus was begotten by God, then his Father is older than he - God has no beginning (Psalms 90:2) and therefore Jesus cannot be God Himself.
- Mary is described in the Gospels as Christ's "mother". Jesus did not exist before his birth of Mary.
- The word 'Trinity' never occurs in the Bible.
- 1 Tim. 2:5: "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus". (see also 1 Corinthians 8:6; Isaiah 63:16; 64:8).
- "God is not a man" (Numbers 23:19; Hosea 11:9); yet Christ was "the son of man".
- Christ is "the Son of the Highest" (Luke 1:32). God only has ultimate highness; Jesus as "the Son of the Highest" cannot have been God Himself in person.
- The language of Father and Son, used about God and Jesus, shows they are not the same. A son may have certain similarities to his father, but cannot be one and the same person.

There are a number of obvious differences between God and Jesus, which clearly show that Jesus was not God himself:

God	Jesus
"God cannot be tempted" (James 1:13).	Christ "was in all points tempted as we are" (Hebrews 4:15).
God cannot die - He is immortal by nature (Psalms 90:2; 1 Timothy 6:16).	Christ died for three days (Matthew 12:40; 16:21).
God cannot be seen by men (1 Timothy 6:16; Exodus 33:20).	Men saw Jesus and handled him (1 John 1:1 emphasizes this).

Other Points to consider are as follows:

- Jesus was "made like his brethren" (Hebrews 2:17) so that God could grant us forgiveness through Christ's sacrifice. To say that Jesus was not totally of human nature denies the good news of Christ.
- In some ways Christ's 'will', or desires, was different from that of God (Matthew 26:39; John 5:30)
- From childhood "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men" (Luke 2:52). This would not be possible if Jesus was 'God the Son'.
- Christ did not know the exact time of his second coming, although the Father did (Mark 13:32).

- God was pleased with Christ's willing obedience which is hard to understand if Jesus was God, living out a life in human form as some kind of tokenistic association with sinful man (Matthew 3:17; 12:18; 17:5).

Personal Testimony 1

I was a Roman Catholic. The stuff about Mary was of course a big thing for me when I first started looking into my faith deeply. I read the sections about the trinity etc. in Bible Basics. It all worried me. I spoke to my priest but frankly he wasn't bothered explaining anything to me. I concluded that if Mary was not of ordinary human nature then Christ could not have been both "son of man" (because he was born of Mary) and "son of God" (because of God's action on Mary through the Holy Spirit). So, she just had to have been an ordinary woman. The fact that Christ had human nature (see Hebrews 2:14-18; Romans 8:3) means that his mother must have had it too, seeing his Father did not have it (consider Job 14:4; 15:14; 25:4). Once I gave up on the idea of Mary being a super-human woman, all the rest of it became easier, and I was soon baptized.

Personal Testimony 2

As an atheist it didn't bother me at all when I became interested in the Bible and learnt that there is only one God. It was just obvious to me that God can't be one and also a trinity. I now realize there are some verses in the Bible hard to understand about the extent to which Jesus revealed God to us. But it seems to me obvious that if there is one God, the Father, then Jesus cannot also be God. I have said this to many people and many seem to want to turn it all into a mystery. OK I know we don't know everything about God. But on the other hand surely we can be clear about some really basic things, like how many Gods there are. Otherwise we can know nothing at all and one may as well return to atheism.

Personal Testimony 3

As a Muslim I had always grown up believing that there was one God, but that Jesus was just another prophet. Yet I was disappointed with my life, I sinned a lot and I felt this need to get right with God. There was nothing in Islam that offered this. So one day I decided to reply to a leaflet I had been given on the street and had kept in my wallet. They sent me the book Bible Basics. Much of it was strange to me at first. But what I was amazed to find out was that these people didn't believe Jesus was God Himself. I thought all Christians believed that, and it was a pleasant surprise to see that not all of them do.

What was hard for me, though, was to realize that Jesus was not just an ordinary man, but He never sinned, and was the Son of God. In my background, sin wasn't seen as important or serious. But it was serious to me. So this idea of a man who never sinned and only on that basis was my saviour, this appealed to me and fascinated me. The more I thought about it, the more I realized why He was so highly rewarded by God and why He is written of in the Bible in such high language, even though He isn't God Himself. And when I finally realized that He really did die for me, it became very clear to me that I must personally associate myself with Him through baptism. So this is what I did and I have never looked back, despite all the problems my decision has brought me.

If you would like to find out more about the Bible's message for you, then please go to our website and explore the True Bible Teaching concerning the Purpose of Almighty God with this earth and your opportunity to be a part of it.

www.truebibleteaching.com