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Lesson 4

Who Is Jesus?

Introduction

Jesus is the center of the Christian religion. To follow Him well, we must have a clear understanding of who He is. He is the head of the church (Colossians 1:18), the means of creation (John 1:3), and He will be the culmination of human history (Revelation 19:11). Because of His nature, it is fitting for Him to have the preeminence in all things. Without Him, all of our attempts at spiritual advancement will fail. Life itself will be empty and without meaning.

Big Question:

What do we need to know about Jesus?

Conversation Starter

One has said, "Christ is all --- All building without him is on sand, which will surely fall. All working without him is in the fire, where it will be consumed. All riches without him have wings and will fly away." Why is what we believe about Jesus so important to our faith?

Transition

In this lesson, we will become more familiar with His nature by focusing on five important truths about our Lord.

1. Jesus Was More Than a Man (John 1:29)

To know Jesus, you must first comprehend what makes Him unique. He is special. There is no one or no thing like Him. When on Earth, He was more than a religious teacher, spiritual leader, or moral example. He was the Son of God, and he remains the Son of God to this day. When John the Baptist met Him, he proclaimed, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

Key Scripture:

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Apart from John's testimony, miracles confirmed Jesus' special nature (Mark 2:10). He healed the sick, showing

He has the power to remedy spiritual sickness (Mark 2:1-12). He performed miraculous feats over nature, proving He is Creator God (Mark 4:35-41). He cast out demons, indicating He had power over the spirit world (Mark 5:1-20). He miraculously fed people with food, exhibiting the way in which He can spiritually nourish those who trust Him (Mark 6:30-44). He even raised the dead, showing He gives eternal life to all who trust in Him (John 11:1-44).

When He was on Earth, a voice from heaven confirmed Jesus' unique nature on more than one occasion. At His baptism, onlookers heard a voice announce, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well-pleased" (Mark 1:11). Another time Jesus took His closest disciples up onto a mountain top. His appearance was transformed in front of them and He embodied the glory of the Lord. A voice was heard once again, saying, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him!" (Mark 9:7). In both instances, the voice from heaven was undoubtedly the voice of God. The Lord's miraculous announcements from heaven were intended to convey that Jesus was unique. Those who heard His teaching and witnessed His miracles were encouraged to pay special attention.

Despite the fact that many cast doubt on Jesus' Divine nature, He Himself affirmed it. On one occasion, He flatly used the revered name of Yahweh in reference to Himself (John 8:58). Some may deny He meant to call Himself God, but His intent was clear. His religious opponents knew what He meant, because they attempted to put Him to death for blasphemy (John 8:59).

In his book *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis has commented on this reality:

A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic – on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg – or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool,

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A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic – on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg – or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.

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Apply

To truly follow Christ, one must regard Jesus for who He really was. Softer forms of Christianity that sterilize the claims of Christ are insufficient. Self-help approaches to the Bible that make Jesus little more than a life-coach won't cut it. To experience His transformational power, one must regard Him as being special and unique. Jesus was and is the Son of God!

2. Jesus Took Care Of Our Biggest Problem (John 6:38, 1 Peter 3:18)

Before time began, Jesus was God's plan for providing salvation for man and woman. In Revelation 13:8, we read of how the names of all who are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb were written "from the foundation of the world in the book of life." Jesus was not a mere rabbi who happened to appear on the scene of human history during the reign of Tiberius. According to the Lord's eternal plan, He was sent to accomplish God's purposes for humanity. Jesus' unique purpose was to provide salvation for men and women. While on earth, Jesus said, "For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me" (John 6:38). What was the will of the Father for Jesus? Plain and simple, Jesus came to save humanity from sins. Peter said, "For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive by the Spirit" (1 Peter 3:18).

Key Scriptures:

"For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me." (John 6:38)

"For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive by the Spirit." (1 Peter 3:18)

Apply

To fully experience the effects of Jesus' work, one must understand what all He did on behalf of humanity. He lived, died, and was raised from the dead for us. He paid the penalty our sin deserves – separation from God.

3. Jesus Is Still Alive (Acts 1:9-10)

Jesus lived on earth for only thirty-three years. His time among humanity was impactful; however, He is no longer here. Christians have been left to pursue His will without Him. Jesus was straightforward about this reality when He was with the Twelve. He regularly told of the way in which it was necessary for Him to go away. On three different occasions, He made announcements about His pending death and departure (Mark 8:31, 9:31, 10:33-34).

In John's gospel, He plainly told them, "I am going away to prepare a place for you" (John 14:2).

Key Scripture:

"After he had said this, he was taken up as they were watching, and a cloud took him out of their sight. While he was going, they were gazing into heaven, and suddenly two men in white clothes stood by them." (Acts 1:9-10)

Jesus' crucifixion was not the cause of His departure. Though He died, He was raised. After His resurrection, He spent forty more days on Earth with His disciples (Acts 1:3). His ultimate departure from Earth did not occur until an event we call the Ascension. Acts 1:9-10 speaks of the event, saying, "After he had said this, he was taken up as they were watching, and a cloud took him out of their sight. While he was going, they were gazing into heaven, and

suddenly two men in white clothes stood by them.”

The event known as the Ascension doesn't get much publicity nowadays. Christians rarely talk about it, and preachers don't preach on it much. Despite the silence concerning the event, it is a pivotal event in the work of Christ. Because of Jesus' ascension Christians have the promise that Jesus resides within their soul through the presence of the Holy Spirit. The reality of this truth was seen through the way our Lord described Christian salvation as a new birth. When talking to a man named Nicodemus, He said, "Truly I tell you, unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

Jesus' words highlighted an important reality of the gospel. The call to follow Christ isn't a call to a system of rules or rituals. It involves a complete change of heart and mind. When one steps out to follow Jesus in faith, a supernatural work occurs within their soul. The Spirit of Christ invades the immaterial part of their nature and transforms them into a completely new person (2 Corinthians 5:17). At the moment of faith, one is born again (Galatians 3:2). The Spirit of Christ makes the believer's heart His home (Ephesians 1:13), and He promises to never leave (Matthew 28:20 and Ephesians 1:14).

Apply

The truth regarding the new birth should bring great comfort to believers. Through the presence of Jesus in their hearts, they have strength to face anything and everything God may allow into their lives (Philippians 4:13). They have an inexhaustible source of comfort (Romans 15:13) and an inner-means of spiritual enlightenment (1 John 2:27). When life is confusing, they have a guide by their side (John 16:13). Through the Spirit of Christ, believers are filled with power to produce all forms of Christian virtue (Galatians 5:22).

Illustrate

Truth concerning where Jesus is now should encourage us in our faith. I like to think of the aforementioned realities in light of my experiences working in the restaurant industry during my college years. I remember when I was taught to cook steaks. Previously, I didn't know the difference between a medium rare or medium well piece of meat. I needed a lot of training!

Fortunately, I had a manager who invested in me. He saw glimmers of a good work ethic in my performance, and he took me under his wing. I was excited the first time we got behind the mesquite grill. He stood next to me and showed me how to flip the steaks and gauge their temperature. He gave me pointers and taught me things I remember to this day. When my training was complete, he released me to run the grill on my own, but I was never totally alone. He was nearby, always on the floor of the restaurant, and merely a call away.

Spiritually speaking, Christians have been blessed with a similar experience. We have a great guide in the Spirit of Christ. Though He has left Earth, He is still very near. In fact, He is actually nearer than He was before. He is in our souls!

4. Jesus Invites Us to a Relationship (John 15:5)

Christianity is different than all other world religions. While other creeds place emphasis on rituals and regulations, Christ places emphasis on relationship. As His children, we aren't called to follow a mere set of principles or precepts. We are called to follow a person! Jesus said, "I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me" (John 15:5). It is when we grasp the relational realities associated with Christ that we will experience His transformational power in our lives.

Key Scripture:

**"I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me."
(John 15:5)**

The word translated “remains” in John 15:5 is one that meant “to be at home with.” Used in regard to people, it depicted a close relationship, the type of relationship one might experience with family members. To really follow Jesus, you must understand that He has called you to have a close relationship with Him.

To enjoy such fellowship with Christ, we must engage in two activities that are basic to every relationship – talking and listening. The first action involves prayer. Jesus has invited all of us to call out to Him through making our requests known unto Him (John 14:13). The second action involves reading God’s Word and listening to what He has to say to us. When He prayed on our behalf, Jesus indicated that the Lord’s truth would be a means through which the church would receive spiritual strength (John 17:17). Hearing from God and talking to God are our two paths to abiding in Christ.

Illustrate

When I was in college I learned about the importance of listening and talking in relationships. I was shy and reserved. I had a hard time interacting with others. Fortunately, someone gave me a book that presented a simple relationship tip. It described human interaction like throwing a ball back and forth. To effectively connect with others, one must learn how to catch the conversational ball (listen) and throw the conversational ball (talk). My relational skills soared as I applied my newfound skill.

To abide in Christ, you need to learn to do something similar. Make it your practice to regularly talk and listen. Be strong in both Scripture and prayer. Through connecting with Jesus through his ordained means of fellowship, you can experience a soul-to-soul connection with Him. His truth will guide you and His presence will accompany you. You will enjoy an abiding relationship with Him, the type of relationship that will fill you with life, joy, and strength.

5. Jesus Is Coming Again (Revelation 21:1-4)

Truth concerning Jesus’ return is important. Some may choose to disregard teaching concerning the subject. I get it. Sensationalists have made the mere mention of end times theology an annoyance for many. Proverbial eye rolling is in order for the claims made by some last days gurus. The book of Revelation has been twisted, hotly debated, and given an unhealthy place of prominence to support the views of some pundits. It is understandable why some bristle up at discussions of end-time events.

Key Scripture:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. I also saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared like a bride adorned for her husband. Then I heard a loud voice from the throne: Look, God’s dwelling is with humanity, and he will live with them. They will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them and will be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away (Revelation 21:1-4).

Despite all the debates out there, the return of Christ is an important topic with which believers should be familiar. It provides great hope for Christians who await the end of all things. Though our world is marred by a lot of confusion and pain, deliverance is coming. Christ wielded a decisive victory over sin and Satan at the cross. He will one day vanquish such things completely when He returns to Earth. John described what Earth will be like after Jesus has returned:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. I also saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared like a bride adorned for her husband. Then I heard a loud voice from the throne: Look, God’s dwelling is with humanity, and he will live with them. They will be his peoples, and God himself will be with

them and will be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away (Revelation 21:1-4).

Apply

Living in this messed up world can breed a lot of anxiety and anger. The fallen philosophies and practices of others can produce a lot of angst and resentment. The pain can be especially difficult to bear for Christians who know Christ's truth.

How can Christ followers carry on? I propose that the return of Christ is a means of great comfort. There is a reason the Lord gave us a record of what will happen in the end. He knew we needed hope to endure. Every last detail of what will happen at the end of time may be unknowable, but we can know Christ is returning to vanquish Satan, sin, and death forever. Never forget that hope is one of the most important Christian virtues. Paul said, "Now these three remain: faith, hope, and love." (1 Corinthians 13:13).

Every time you are tempted to be torn up by a news report, remember that Jesus is coming again. When difficult people unnerve you, set your mind on the Second Coming. If life seems sad and depressing, look forward to the day in which all things will be made new. Maintain the perspective of John. In closing the book of Revelation, He said, "Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!" (Revelation 22:20)

Follow Me Challenges

PERSONAL: Follow up with those on your "My 5 List" who attended the Easter service. Ask them about their experience.

PUBLIC: Participate in, invite folks to, or host a Backyard BBQ. More information can be found at tabernaclebaptist.org/events.

PRAYER: Pray for...

- the people on your "My 5 List" to be receptive to the gospel.
- TBC Backyard BBQs.