

Who Is Jesus?

Larry Yarber

Larry and his wife Cheryl live in Mountain Grove, Missouri. Larry labored for many years with the church there and began work with the church in Fordland, Missouri in 1998. Larry works a secular job in addition to preaching the gospel.

When Jesus came into the coast of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. (Matthew 16: 13-16).

Our eternal salvation will be based, at least in part, on who we acknowledge Jesus to be. Yet, at the same time, it does not affect his true identity. Jesus is who he is regardless of what we choose to believe. Thus, the question before us is not “Who do men say that Jesus is” but “Who is Jesus”?

RELIABLE EVIDENCE

The only way to establish the true identity of any famous person is to go to a reliable record and see what it says about them. We have such a record of Jesus Christ in the Bible. It is a library of 66 books written by about 40 different men over a period of approximately 1500 years. He is the central figure of these writings. The story of his generations is contained in it (Matthew 1:1). Our dilemma isn't concerning the source of information but is the source of our information credible?

First, let's point out that the Bible claims to be the word of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17). For this claim to be true we must assume or prove the existence of God. If there is no God then the Bible is false and not a reliable record. The Bible says that if a man denies the existence of God he is a “...fool...” (Psalm 53:1). It also states that his Godhead and power are seen through the things he has made so that they are “...without excuse” (Romans 1:20). The Hebrew writer wrote “For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God” (Hebrews 3:4). The Psalmist penned “The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament sheweth his handywork” (Psalm 19:1). Let's put all of this into perspective. To see a house and then to say it was the result of some accident instead of the work of some intelligent being is without excuse and the ramblings of a fool. The cosmological and the teleological arguments for the existence of God are irrefutable. There is a God. The universe declares it to be so.

Secondly, the credibility of the Bible is established within it's own pages. Moses told about life being in the blood centuries before the scientific world discovered this medical fact (Leviticus 17:11). He also wrote about the existence of the Hittite people in the Patriarchal Age when historians denied this archeological fact (Genesis 26:34). Isaiah named Cyrus as the deliverer 160 years before he appeared on the scene. (Isaiah 44:28). Only divine inspiration can explain this scientific, historic, and prophetic knowledge which was unknown to the world at the time it was written. One can only conclude that the Bible is reliable and accurate.

We can conclude then that the credibility of the record isn't the problem but that the record is overlooked due to ignorance, prejudiced, and biased opinions of those in the academic world.

WHAT DO MEN SAY?

Jesus has always been a controversial figure and will undoubtedly continue to be. We know that he was a real person because in addition to the Biblical account some secular historians have made reference to him. Even our own method of dating is centered on his birth. But what do people have to say about him?

For the most part people of today have the same perspective of Jesus as those of his own day and age. Some at that time thought Jesus to be John the Baptist, Elias, Jeremias, or one of the other prophets (Matthew 16:14). Herod seems to have started this rumor about John (Mark 6:14-18). Since he had murdered John his own guilty conscience appears to have convinced him that Jesus was the reincarnated John. Some may have thought that he was Elijah because of Malachi's prophecy (Malachi 4:5-6). However, Malachi wasn't speaking about a literal appearance of Elijah but of one who would come in the spirit and power of Elijah. This was fulfilled in John, not Jesus (Matthew 11:12-14). Others may have believed that he was Jeremiah because they both had the same compassionate attitude (Luke 19:41 and Jeremiah 9:1). We can only speculate as to why they thought he was one of the other prophets. Then there were some, like those of today, who said, "...he is a good man..." (John 7:12). They didn't believe in his deity but called him "...the carpenter's son..." (Matthew 13:55). His brothers didn't even believe in him (John 7:5).

Then there were his critics. Like many of today they perceived him to be evil. They said he was a Samaritan possessed by a devil (John 8:48); a deceiver (John 7:12); and a winebibber and glutton, a friend of publicans and sinners (Matthew 11:19). Some today have even accused him of being a homosexual because he chose celibacy. ABC recently aired a program hosted by Peter Jennings and entitled "In Search of Jesus". It was not a search for the true identity of Jesus but a display of intellectual dishonesty from those who claim to be so objective. They sought to distort, misrepresent, and ridicule the true record. Their phobia of Christ, Christianity, and His followers is unlimited. Their perspective of Jesus and his followers is as intolerant as that of those who crucified the Lord.

WHO IS JESUS?

The Bible supplies us with a great list of witnesses to Jesus' deity. The prophet of old said he would be called "...Emmanuel..." "...God with us..." (Matthew 1:23). Gabriel, an angel of God said he would be called "...the Son of the Highest..." (Luke 1:32) and "...the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). Peter said, "...thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16). Martha said that she believed that he was "...the Christ, the Son of God..." (John 11:27). The Ethiopian Eunuch said, "...I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37). And when he appeared to the disciples after his crucifixion doubting Thomas said "...my Lord and my God" (John 20:27-28). This is all in keeping with our Lord's own admission that he was the "Son of God" (John 10:36).

There were also hostile witnesses to his deity. The devils said he was the "...Son of God..." (Matthew 8:28-29). The thief on the cross called him "...Lord..." (Luke 23:39-43); and the Roman

centurion, as well as those that were with him said, "...truly this was the Son of God" (Matthew 27:54).

There is no doubt but that Jesus was and is who he claimed to be. He proved this to be the case by the miracles that he performed. They have been recorded that we "...might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God..." (John 20:30-31). He rebuked the wind and the sea and they obeyed him (Matthew 8:23-27). He told John's disciples "The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them" (Matthew 11:5). What greater testimony to his deity could be found?

Many of today's scholars ridicule the miracles that he did and those who believe in them. They think that they can intimidate others into rejecting the deity of Jesus. At the same time these academic wizards embrace their own foolish miracles. They believe that fish turn into men. What a miracle! They believe an accidental explosion created an orderly world with countless forms of life and somehow sustains itself. What a miracle! You tell me, who's kidding whom?

Jesus also referred to himself as the "...Son of Man..."(Matthew 16:13). He was the son of man in that he was "...made of a woman..." (Galatians 4:4); he became flesh and blood like you and I and was subject to the same sufferings that we experience (Hebrews 2:14-18); and he was tempted like you and I are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:14-16). Jesus risked his eternal existence by becoming flesh and blood to die for us that we might live (Philippians 2:6-8). Sin could have cost him his eternal existence but still he came (Romans 6:23).

CONCLUSION

Since Jesus is who he claimed to be, the Son of God, we are left with some serious implications. This means that all the other claims he made about himself are true too. He is "...the light of the world..."(John 8:12); "...the door of the sheep" (John 10:7); "...the good shepherd..." (John 10:11); "...the resurrection..." (John 11:25); and "...the way, the truth, and the life..." (John 14:6). All this means that Jesus is the only means of salvation for all men of all ages. Every other way is false. This may seem to be harsh and cruel but what is really harsh and cruel is to know the truth and to hide it from others thus condemning them to eternal punishment. Now let me ask you "Who is Jesus"?