

Who is Jesus? His person, man and God

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 07 September 2014

Preacher: Philip Wells

[0 : 00] So these Sunday mornings we have been looking together at some fundamental points of the Christian faith. And today we are going to look at one.

! I think there is no more significant question that you could ask than this. Who is Jesus Christ? The Christian answer, as I intend to show, means that Christianity is completely different to any other religion.

It claims something that no other religion claims. And if this claim is true, it changes everything for each one of us.

The question then, who is Jesus Christ? This is a question about the person of Christ.

[1 : 01] That's the technical language. There is another question. There is also another question which says, what did he come to do? Who is he?

What did he come to do? You can separate those into two questions. The first one is about the person of Christ. The second is about the work of Christ.

And although you can separate it into two questions, they really just go hand in hand together. Who is he? What did he come to do? The Bible is always telling us who he is and what he came to do.

He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, for example. What answers have people given to this question?

So some people would say, Jesus was a great spiritual teacher, a prophet. But let's ask the big question.

[2 : 05] How great a teacher is he? How true is his teaching? And how deep does his teaching go?

Does it go to the depths of God himself? Some people have said, Christian people say, he's a king. Christmas carols, Christmas songs in the Western tradition talk about Jesus as being the son of David. He's the Christ.

Christ is not his surname. It's a title. It means you are the Messiah, the anointed one. The Christ is the Greek translation.

Messiah is the Hebrew translation. We would say the king. But what authority does this king have? How much authority does this king have?

[3 : 13] What jurisdiction does he have? Is he king, for example, only over Western countries? Well, actually, he isn't even king over Western countries these days.

Is he king only over Christians? How much of a Christian's life is he king over? Most of it, some of it, bits of it, all of it. Or is he, in fact, king over everybody?

What is the extent of his kingship? Is he lord of all? Is his kingdom the kingdom of God?

And also, Jesus is the crucified saviour. The Romans in those ancient days killed Jesus with the agreement and cooperation of the Jewish authorities.

Everybody was in on it. They killed him by crucifying him. They killed him by this method of execution where you make a cross of wood, put somebody, and nail their hands and feet, put it up, and the person dies a slow and agonizing death, a horrible death, through loss of blood and dehydration.

[4 : 33] It takes a long time to die. He was crucified. Christians believe that in that act, he did something to save men and women from what they need saving from.

That he paid the price for our sins. But let's ask the question, who paid? Was it paid out of the bank account, as it were, of a human being?

Was it simply a man who died? Or was it an angel who died, in sort of Superman? Or was the price paid by God himself?

So you see, this question of who is Jesus fits into all sorts of very important matters. And I've added just at the end, and does he really understand us?

Let's suppose we take a very high view of who Jesus is. Has he departed from us? Is he so high that he doesn't really understand us? He doesn't know what it's like to feel tired, etc.

[5 : 47] So that's the sort of question that we're looking at this morning. And it turns out that these are crucial matters.

And over the centuries of the Christian church, the 2,000 years of the Christian church, people have thought about this, and debated, and prayed.

And you can boil it down to these three questions like this. Number one, is Jesus truly God?

That is to say, let's put it simply, that he's the creator, and not created. Which side of that line is he? Created or creator? And then, is he truly human?

So that the distinction between us and him is simply that we're sinners, and he's not. He's like us, but without sin. And then we could ask the third question, is he truly one?

[6 : 54] Or do we end up thinking about some split creature that is sort of neither one thing nor the other? Is he truly one? And the more you think about it, the more profound these questions are.

And I'm going to say that the answers I'm going to give you this morning are, number one, yes. He is the creator, not created. And yes, he is truly human.

Like us, the only exception being sin. And he is one savior. He's not a sort of a philosophical conundrum. We always encounter him as being beautifully, harmoniously one, manhood and deity in perfect harmony.

And then if you were to ask, how? How can it be that the God who made everything could come down to earth?

How can the infinite God be contracted converted to a couple of meters tall? I will say, I've no idea. I don't know how that happens. I don't know the mechanics of it.

[8 : 07] There's many things about this that in the end are mysteries. But faith, Christian faith, doesn't, calls us in the end to believe what God has said.

So I'm going to look in the Bible and see what God has said. And these answers being yes, yes and yes, we can say that Jesus gives us a completely true revelation of God.

And Jesus could say, if you've seen me, you have seen the Father. If you have looked into the face of Jesus Christ, if you have begun to understand him, you are truly seeing who God is.

And we worship him as God, which is what we've been doing in our singing and praying. Thomas said to Jesus, my Lord and my God.

And he, that's the position of a worshiper. We can trust him, if these things being true, we can trust him with complete trust.

[9 : 19] Jesus said in John 14, one, trust in God, trust also in me. We'll think about that a bit more. And we come in wonder and awe at this deep mystery.

In the beginning of the book of Revelation, John sees the risen Christ in his glory. And it says, when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead.

And this reminds us of the majesty and the wonder and the glory and the magnitude of Jesus Christ.

We don't see the fullness of who he is as yet, but one day we will. So that's the subject. And I'll do it in those three parts, looking first of all at his humanity, then at his divinity, and then at his unity.

So first of all, does the Bible teach the real, true humanness of Jesus and his humanity? So I'll come back to Superman. Superman looks human, especially with his glasses on, because he looks like Clark Kent when he's got his glasses on.

[10 : 43] But he wasn't really human, was he? He didn't have the same limitations as us. It's not a fair comparison. So we walk, we could walk or run, but Superman can fly, a bit like an angel.

Having a race with Superman would have no meaning, because he's just on a different league of his own. Sleep. Now, it's a pity we don't really have a Superman expert, but I don't think Superman needs to sleep, does he?

What a pointless question. He's a fictional character, for goodness sake. But I don't think he has to sleep. But, see, Jesus is not Superman.

Jesus, Superman doesn't understand tiredness and frailty. So, Lois Lane, should she have invited Superman to dinner, and he turns up and she's frazzled because she's been cooking and had to go down to the shops and everything like that, and he just breezes in, whoosh, like that, and she says, you don't know what it's like.

And of course, she's quite right, because he doesn't. Or if Superman was in the egg and spoon race at school for the parents on sports day, he could fry the egg.

[12:14] He wouldn't fry it, would he? But with his x-ray vision, so that wouldn't be fair, and then he could stabilise himself as he ran along so that it wouldn't fall off the spoon. It's just, he's not like us.

Now, Jesus is truly and fully human. And you say, well, what does that mean? Well, I think the way to answer it is, whatever human is, take sin out of it.

Not sin, but whatever human is, Jesus is. Whatever human is, Jesus is. So, you know, Jesus has a human body.

Jesus is able to conduct a conversation in a human way. He knows, Jesus has a thought life, Jesus has emotions, Jesus makes up his mind to do things, Jesus has habits, Jesus responds to people on our level as a truly human being.

A couple of, a couple of texts. So, Romans 8, verse 3, which I'll read to you, says this, what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering.

[13:45] God did something by sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, the likeness of sinful man.

He was made like us, not sinful, but like sinful flesh, so that he could pay the price, not cheating, but really in the way that we would have had to pay the price if it had been us.

He did this to be a sin offering, so it links his person and his work. Let's look at Hebrews 2, verses 14 to 18. So, see if you can look this one up.

Would you mind looking this one up with me? So, if you've got a Bible there, it's Hebrews chapter 2 from verse 14. So, when somebody has found a page number, could they shout that out for us?

Hebrews 2, Hebrews 2, verse 14. This is the New Testament book called Hebrews.

[15:04] It's written to people who become Christians from a Jewish background. And the particular thing he's on about is Jesus a good enough saviour.

Does he, or would it be better to go back to being a Jew? And he talks about us, the children.

Hebrews 2, verse 14. The children have flesh and blood. He too, this is Jesus, he too shared in their humanity.

so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death, that is the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

For it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. Jesus didn't come to save angels, he would have had to do the whole angel thing and become like an angel, but he came to save humans and has to do the whole human thing and he refers back to Abraham.

[16:15] It is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

It's saying an awful lot, but it's saying at least this, he took us on as his project to save us, that meant that he had to share in our humanity, to be made like his brothers in every way and he says that's so brilliant because he suffered, he was tempted like we are, so he's able to help us, he's able to say I know what that's like, I can bring to this exactly what's needed.

So I'm going to probably repeat myself later in saying that, but I can say that a proper human price was paid for human sin and a proper human salvation was achieved so that no part of humanness is left unredeemed.

No part of the human condition is unredeemed so that the past, the present, the Lord knows where we're at now and future, future salvation, the glory that's to come, won't make us subhuman or floating round on clouds as if we were wafts of air, but will be a restoration of the human body, the redemption of the body.

We will be saved to be fully human in the world to come, whatever that means. So, just saying briefly that about his humanity, that tends to be not the thing that's attacked, let's look at the divinity of Jesus, the fact that he is God, his Godness.

[18:35] Now, it's not a new thing to say, to criticize this and to oppose this. Arius, who, according to Wikipedia, lived from 256 to 336 in Libya, was one of the notorious Christian teachers who said, well, Jesus is great, but he's not God.

He's, and the Jehovah's Witnesses, whom you will have heard of, follow the same error today. And if you've been to a bookstore recently, or a station, you might have picked up a booklet saying, Jesus, what does the Bible really teach?

And it is wrong, because it doesn't say what the Bible really teaches. It repeats the error, the mistake, the deception, the lie, of Arius, and it says wrongly, it says that Jesus is not God, and the Jehovah's Witnesses say, he's not God, he's not an ordinary man, he's something else, he's a, another, he's something different.

He's a spirit son, whatever that may be. They say, and they say that wrongly, they say he's not the creator. So Arius said, there was a time when there was God, but there was no son of God.

And the Bible says that's not true. Jesus has always existed, he hasn't always taken human flesh, but he's always existed, he's been there from the beginning.

[20 : 14] King. And they say that he's not to be worshipped, but they're wrong. Islam, too, speaks about Jesus, calling Isa, and they say that he was a prophet, but he was not God, and that he was superseded by Muhammad, which seems to me to be self-contradictory, because if he's a prophet, then what he says is true, and if he says he's God, then he's a prophet and he's God, but that's a debate that we might have at another point.

Both of these and all rejections of Jesus' divinity, I think, come down to the fact that for Jesus to be God is a miracle.

It is not something that we can understand how, and we tend to fall into this way of thinking, if we can't understand how, then God can't do it.

if we can't understand how it can't be true, this is a great mistake. It's to say that my clever brain is greater than God, which is a most irreverent thing to say.

God is greater than we are. Why should we assume that everything that God does and everything that God says is something we could have thought of anyway? it's a very arrogant and wrong and irreverent thing.

[21 : 45] It's called rationalism. And this idea of Jesus being God, as you will quickly see, is the beginning of thinking about the Trinity.

Because if we have God the Father in heaven, and if we have God the Son walking about on earth, and if at the time of Jesus' baptism, you remember the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus in the form of a dove, we have God in heaven, we have God walking on the earth, and we have God descending on Jesus.

So we've got the makings of something we're going to have to call something, and the Trinity is the name that people have come to with that. So what do the text say?

There are a huge, huge number of texts about Jesus and his divinity. So one of them I quoted to you already, which was John 20 verse 28, where Thomas sees the risen Christ and says, my Lord and my God.

And Hebrews chapter 1, you might like to, if you found Hebrews, you might like to go to the first chapter of it. It quotes the psalm that we began the meeting with, and it's, so the psalm is in the Old Testament, looking forward, predicting something, and the particular wording that is picked up is that the king is spoken to in the psalm, and he's spoken to as God.

[23 : 21] So Hebrews 1 verse 8 says, about the son, he says, your throne, O God, will last forever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom.

You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness, therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy. And you notice that the text speaks to the king and says, your God has anointed you, but also speaks to the king and says, your throne, O God. Now, you might say, oh well that's misreading it, because there's two different sentences, one is saying God's throne lasts, and then another sentence is changing and looking at Messiah. There's always ways you can get round this, except there are so many texts that it's very difficult to dodge them all.

It's a bit like saying you can dodge an avalanche because each individual stone that's falling down you could dodge, but there's so many of them, it just gets you in the end. And so it is with the texts about Jesus, try dodging them, but in the end you can't do it.

There's many texts, oh sorry, there's a number of texts that specifically say Jesus is God, a number. There are also a number of texts that talk about God, but slot in Jesus in that place.

[24 : 49] So please look at Philippians chapter 2 verse 10. It's perhaps difficult to give you the impact of this just in a few minutes this morning, but at least we'll have a try.

Philippians 2 verse 10, which is what Zach read. Page number please. 1-1-7 something. 9. Okay. So please look at what this text says. So verse 10 says, God gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. So you see that text. Now, it mentions two parts of the body. What two parts of the body does it mention? This is a real question. I'm asking a real question. The knee is one part, and what's the part of the body? The tongue. Something happened there. The knee, and the I'm just going to get my phone out. [26:14] The battery, isn't it? Just bear with us a second. Is that mic working there? Okay, carry on with that one.

The knee and the tongue. And at whose name does the knee bow? What does it say? At whose name does the knee bow? Did you decide? At whose name does the knee bow? Jesus. You're quite sure about that? Yeah. And whose name does the tongue confess? Jesus. So you're quite sure that's what the text says. Please turn to Isaiah 45, Old Testament. Old Testament. 731.

Old Testament. 731. 731. Isaiah 45. Isaiah 45. We're looking at verse 2. [27:49] Sorry, verse 22. Verse 22. Isaiah 45, verse 22. Now listen to this. And have it there in front of you in black and white.

turn to me and be saved. Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth, for I am God, there is no other. So who's speaking in this text?

God. Could it be anybody else? No. How do we know that? Because?

There is no other. He says, don't confuse me with anybody else. Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, there is no other. By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked.

Before me every knee will bow, by me every tongue will swear. They will say of me, in the Lord alone are righteousness and strength. All who have raged against him will come to him and be put to shame.

[28:53] etc. Who is speaking? Is he including other people in this?

Is he saying, and this is also true of many other people as well? No. Because he said, there is no other. And in verse 24 he says, in the Lord alone are righteousness and strength.

So the whole text is saying, this is me, I don't share this with other people. It's not that you have got many choices. I alone this is true of.

So it's about the Lord, about God, and only him. Yes? That's what the text says. Do you notice two parts of the body in the text? text? Give this one part of the body.

The knee. Before me every knee will bow. Is there another part of the body? Tongue. Every tongue will confess or swear. That's what he's quoting in Philippians, isn't it?

[30:03] In Isaiah it says, this is about the Lord God. It's only about the Lord God. It doesn't apply to anybody else apart from the Lord God. It's me alone.

And then Paul, when he writes Philippians, says, I can take that text and say, this applies to Jesus. Do you see, do you agree that that's what the texts are saying?

The Philippians says it's to do with Jesus. The Old Testament says it's only to do with the Lord God, and both are true. And there's a number of texts like that.

It shows us the Godness of Jesus. And, I'm just doing this very quickly, there are texts that effortlessly attribute to Jesus what belongs to God alone.

Only God judges, Jesus is the judge. Only God gives life, Jesus gives life. Only God is to be worshipped, no one else, and we're to worship Jesus.

[31:06] So, if you'd please turn to the book of Revelation at the end of the Bible, so you could even go to the very end and work your way forward. And I want to look at Revelation chapter 4, and then Revelation chapter 5.

And please don't be put off by the confusing nature, it's all to do with visions and things, but let's see in Revelation chapter 4, verse 11, it says, Revelation chapter 4, verse 11, let's read it out together, if you've got it there, Revelation 4, 11, we'll read it out.

You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created, and have their being.

Who is this addressed to? Who is he speaking to? Well, it says Lord and God, yeah, and why is this person being honoured?

Because he's the creator, you're the creator. And notice the words that are used, you are worthy to receive glory and honour and power.

[32 : 33] Those are words of worship. That's Revelation chapter 4, the Lord who sits on the throne, the creator is worshipped for being creator, glory, honour, worthiness, power.

Please look at chapter 5, verse, I think, I mean verse 12. Please let's read this aloud, verse 12.

This is what happens next. Revelation 5, verse 12, together in a loud voice they sang, worthy is the lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and glory and honour and praise.

And who is this addressed to? to Jesus, the lamb is Jesus. And notice the words that are used, power, wisdom, strength, worthy, honour, glory, praise.

If that isn't worship, I don't know what is. It's almost exactly the same wording as the worship that's given to the creator. And here is the lamb who is just treated no less than the creator.

[33 : 56] He's worshipped in almost exactly the same words. And why is he worshipped? What is the particular aspect by which he is worshipped? Worthy is the lamb who was slain.

Yeah. The particular aspect of the divine worship that he receives is that he's made the sacrifice.

So, very quickly, the divinity of Jesus.

He's not God the Father, but he is God the Son. He is the creator. And when it says Jesus is Lord, that's a big statement.

He is Lord with all the authority over everything. Let's look briefly at the third thing. Jesus is one.

There's no tussle between his godness and his humanness.

the problem of doing it sort of philosophically under the divinity of Christ, the humanness of Christ, you begin to think that there is a thing called the divine nature and a thing called the human nature and Jesus has got both these things.

[35 : 07] That's a mistaken way of thinking about it. He is one person who is human and who is divine. He's one person. There are tussles, of course, in the Garden of Gethsemane, there's a tussle of Jesus' horror of suffering versus willingly obeying the Father.

But it's not a tussle between his divinity and his humanity, it's a tussle between horror of suffering and obedience. Here's a lovely text, Mark chapter four, verse 35 to 41.

Please turn to this one. Mark's gospel. A page number for us?

1006. 1006. Look at this. See if it doesn't make you gasp. That day when evening came, he told his disciples, let's go to the other side.

Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. A furious squall came up and the waves broke over the boat so it was nearly swamped.

[36 : 26] Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, teacher, don't you care if we drown? He got up, stood up in the boat, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, quiet, be still.

And the wind died down and it was completely calm. And he said to his disciples, why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith? And then they were terrified and they asked each other, who is this?

Even the wind and waves obey him. What a fantastic incident that is. I'll just pick out this. Here's a human being, here's a man.

He's so tired that he can go to sleep even when the waves are squashing and wind is blowing. He's tired, isn't he?

He's a real human being. And then when he wakes up, he can speak to the wind and the waves, peace, quiet and down.

[37 : 35] And they do it. Only God can do that. Beautiful pictures, no sense of any tussle about it, just Jesus, isn't it? It's just the way he does things, just who he is. No wonder the disciples say, you know, they're more afraid of what he's just done than they were of drowning.

What sort of person is this? what manner of man is this? Who is this? Even the wind and waves obey him. Let's draw our thoughts to a conclusion.

This shows us at least the trustworthiness of Jesus. You trust somebody according to how good they are at something and how much they know about it.

You might trust them to do a certain thing but you might not trust them to drive your car but not trust them to drive a bus something like that.

But here is Jesus whose reliability is the deepest reliability possible because it's the reliability that goes back into the Godhead itself.

[38 : 47] Jesus said you trust God because he is the strongest most trustworthy! most secure that there can possibly be and Jesus says trust me equally.

The Christian faith is rightly called faith because it's not about doing stuff and doing a ritual it's about residing our confidence in a person.

Yeah. Let me also say something about the sympathy and compassion of Jesus. This point that he understands us is an emphatic point.

We have someone who says we have someone who not someone who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses but we have one who has been tempted in every way just as we are yet without sin.

Let's therefore pray with confidence that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. This is a daily a day by day practical doctrine.

[39 : 53] The humanity of Jesus and the divinity of Jesus means that we can pray every day in our situation and get help. Brothers and sisters we don't need Mary.

In Roman Catholicism Mary's put as the one who's got a listening ear and she understands but Jesus doesn't. We don't need her because Jesus understands completely and we don't need the saints in Greek orthodoxy the saints are the big people because they carry the weight and they're interested they know and understand we don't need the saints because we've got Jesus Jesus knows us fully and he combines the down to earth understanding with the up to heaven omnipotence that's a great saviour isn't it?

we can pray to him and receive on him and we can engage in that amazing miracle on a day by day basis by prayer thirdly the price was paid by God don't know whether you follow all the sort of economics and finance of the eurozone and banks of last resort and this whole thing about keeping the pound sterling in Scotland if you have a problem which bank do you go to in the end who in the end covers the debt who can afford it who can pay for the Jehovah's witnesses they don't know because they don't think Jesus is God and when the price was paid they don't know who paid it they don't know how much could be afforded and it had to have a limit on it somewhere but we know that when the price was paid it was God who paid it out of his infinite riches there's no sense that he could ever get to the point where he said this is a bit too much for me to cope with the church of God which he purchased with his own blood he paid the price we don't have to worry that there will be some debt that we can run up that can't be paid for because the payer was an infinite person do you get the point of that he paid the price we can have confidence and liberty that our sins will never come back to sort of say well that wasn't sorted out properly because God did it and we have gratitude we don't just say thank you Jesus as if you know thank you uncle for paying my university fees or something but thank you almighty God father son and holy spirit you saved me and we worship Jesus we love to worship Jesus we like Thomas who said to the wounded still had the marks in his hands the raised

Jesus this is what Christians say my Lord and my God let's sing together let's sing together let's sing together let's together!