

**WHO  
IS  
JESUS?**

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## WHO IS JESUS?

(Texts have been quoted from the Revised Version unless otherwise indicated.)

Jesus asked His own disciples this very question:

Matthew 16:13	...Who do men say that the Son of man is?
14	And they said, Some say John the Baptist; some, Elijah: and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.
15	He saith unto them, But who say ye that I am?
16	And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

So important was this identification that Jesus declared it to be the 'rock' upon which He would build His church (vs.18), yet now, as then, Christ's true identity remains largely obscure, because there are many untruths in the world which compete with the word of God for our acceptance.

### **Jesus' Relationship to God: The Common Perception**

One Sunday evening I happened to hear a short radio message sponsored by one of the major Christian denominations, and it posed the question, "What do we say to our children when they ask what God is like? Is He big? Old? Like Santa Claus? The fact is, no one knows, because no one has ever seen God." At this point I was a little curious as to where this was leading, though I was quite unprepared for the punch-line. "But the answer is simple", it went on, "because the Bible tells us that Jesus is the visible part of the invisible God."

There is a verse, Colossians 1:15, which refers to Jesus as "the image of the invisible God", but I have not been able to find any Bible passage that says Jesus is part of God, visible or invisible. And yet, most of the Christian world would be comfortable with that description. How has this come about?

### **The Influence of Heathen Religion**

The idea of the deity comprising three persons who share a mysterious relationship did not originate from the Bible. One of the most common representations of the godhead in ancient heathen religion is that of a mother with an infant child; thus the goddess Isis is seen portrayed in Egyptian temples. To those initiated into this religion, the child Horus in her arms is at the same time his own father, the unseen male deity, Osiris. Under different names, the divine mother and her mysterious child

were to be found throughout the ancient world, the idea later being adopted by the Greeks and Romans, but its origin can be traced back to Babylon<sup>1</sup>, scene of the first rebellion against God after the Flood, and according to the Bible the origin of false worship (Genesis 11:1-9; Jeremiah 50:38; 51:7).

The notion that the god or gods might appear in human form was also widespread, as demonstrated by the experience of Paul and Barnabas at Lystra (Acts 14:8-13). The Osiris cult actually incorporated the killing of the divine man and the resurrection of the dead god<sup>2</sup>, and aspects of this are seen in the myths of other ancient religions, including Greek and Roman. Is it any wonder that when the Gospel spread out into a world steeped in such false worship, that it was interpreted by many in terms of those beliefs? Indeed, it took less than three centuries before an amalgam of sophisticated idolatry became the orthodox teaching of the nominal Christian church. Even in the lifetime of the apostles, false ideas had begun to spread in the church concerning the nature of Jesus. John makes mention of this in his epistles:

2 John 7 For many deceivers are entered into the world,  
who confess not that Jesus Christ is come  
in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

(Also 1 John 4:1-3)

How can we avoid the deception, and discern who Jesus really is? The answer is implied in Jesus' response to Peter's confession (Matthew 16):

17 Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah:  
for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee,  
but my Father which is in heaven.

To assume that Peter had acquired this knowledge in some miraculous way would be to completely overlook God's work in preparing Israel for the coming of Christ. God most certainly revealed to Peter who Jesus was, but in the same way that He revealed it to others who believed on Jesus at that time, because Jesus said elsewhere,

John 6:45 It is written in the prophets, And they shall all  
be taught of God. Every one that hath heard from  
the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto me.

It was the word of God through the prophets that led Peter and others to recognise Jesus. How many in Israel, though, had heard from the Father but had not taken it to heart?

In the New Testament we have an even greater revelation from God available to us. “He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6), and I believe that if we make the understanding of God’s word our first priority, then we can find the truth about who Jesus is.

### **Jesus As a Man: The Crucial Factor**

Apart from giving us an account of Jesus’ life and work on earth, and the knowledge that He is now in heaven with the Father, the Bible also reveals that Jesus was originally with God in heaven before His life on earth began (Micah 5:2). Thus Jesus’ existence can be divided into three distinct phases, punctuated by two miraculous events, His conception in a human mother, and His resurrection from the dead. But it is the period between Jesus’ conception and His resurrection that concerns us most. If we can understand from the scriptures what kind of being Jesus was, and what His relationship to God was, during His time on earth, His identity in those other phases of His existence will come more clearly into focus.

The Gospels of Matthew and Luke begin their account with the circumstances surrounding the birth of Jesus. The angel Gabriel, sent to announce to Mary God’s intention for her, said:

- Luke 1:30 ...Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.
- 31 And thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus.
- 32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:
- 33 and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.
- 34 And Mary said unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?
- 35 And the angel said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: wherefore also that which is to be born shall be called holy, the Son of God. (RV).

Mary was at that time betrothed to Joseph, a descendant of King David (Matthew 1:20), subsequently becoming his wife; and Luke tells us that it was generally assumed that Jesus was Joseph’s son (Luke 3:23). That is reflected in the genealogies of Christ given by both Matthew and Luke,

matters of public record which show respectively the legal succession to the throne of Israel, and Joseph's descent from Nathan, the son of David<sup>3</sup>.

### **The Familial Link Between Mary and Jesus**

Mary is everywhere spoken of in the Gospels as Jesus' mother, but a difficulty is sometimes perceived with this simple Bible teaching. If Mary was a member of the fallen human race, how could she conceive a child free from the taint of 'original sin'? The Roman Catholic church saw this as such a problem that it contrived the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception (1854), which declared that Mary was also without sin from the moment she was conceived.

Other views hold Mary to have been only a vehicle for the pregnancy, with no actual blood relationship between herself and Jesus, thus avoiding his contamination. But I believe that such obstacles should not be placed in the way of a straightforward scriptural teaching. The first prophecy in the Old Testament concerned Christ: God said that the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15, 1 Timothy 2:15). The attachment of this prophecy to Eve rather than Adam implies that Christ's connection with the human race would be through His mother (Galatians 4:4). Mary was Jesus' natural mother, but the Gospel writers are unanimous that His Father was God (Matthew 1:18-25; Mark 1:1), and clearly this factor ensured that Jesus was not in any way encumbered with the heritable defects common to the rest of humanity.

### **Was Jesus Christ Human?**

Because God caused Mary to conceive, should we assume that Jesus was something more than a human being? We are all the children of mortal human parents, so didn't Jesus, being the Son of God, transcend the human race? Is the expression, 'god-man', that theologians have coined for Jesus, therefore justified? All this is to forget that the Bible also calls the first man, Adam, "the son of God" (Luke 3:38). Adam had no human parent, but is it ever suggested that Adam was not human? Does anyone refer to him as the 'god-man'? Quite the reverse; Adam is the very definition of what it is to be human.

There were a number of significant reasons for Christ to appear on the earth, but there was one purpose for which it was essential that He be a human being. As Paul reveals, "that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man"; that is, by the offering of His sinless life make atonement for the sins of the human race (Romans 5:12-19; 1 Corinthians 15:22; 1 Timothy 2:5,6; 1 John 2:2). The Bible uses a number of different terms to describe the nature of Christ's sacrifice:

- Matthew 20:28 even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give **his life** a ransom for many.
- John 6:51 I am the living bread which came down out of heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: yea and the bread which I will give is **my flesh**, for the life of the world. (RV)
- 1 Timothy 2:5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men,  
6 the man Christ Jesus, who gave **himself** a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. (KJV)
- 1 Peter:1:18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation, *received* by tradition from your fathers;  
19 but with **the precious blood of Christ**, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. (KJV).

These terms , "life", "flesh", "self", "blood", imply that everything which constituted Christ's being was given up when He died on the cross. His final words, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46), was itself an acknowledgement that God is the giver of life, and that when human beings die they lose that gift, which in a figurative sense returns to Him who gave it (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

### **Christ and Man Equivalent in Death**

If the life which Jesus offered up was the life of a human being, then in death Jesus and man must necessarily have been the same also. The idea that there is an indestructible part of us, our soul, which lives on when our body dies, is another concept imported into Christian theology from Greek and other ancient heathen religions. When God gave life to Adam, the scripture says,

- Genesis 2:7 And God breathed into Adam's nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.

Adam did not receive a soul, he became one. The Hebrew word *nephesh* [Strong #5315] means "a *breathing* creature". 'Soul' is simply another word for a living being, and the death of a man is therefore the death of that 'soul'. Isaiah prophesied of Christ's death, using the same Hebrew word:

Isaiah 53:10      Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him;  
                         he hath put him to grief:  
                         when thou shalt make **his soul** an offering  
                         for sin,

and again in verse 12,

Isaiah 53:12      Therefore will I divide him a portion  
                         with the great, and he shall divide the spoil  
                         with the strong; because he hath poured  
                         out **his soul** unto death.

### **The State of the Dead**

Some theologians have misrepresented 2 Timothy 1:10, "...our Saviour Jesus Christ, who...hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel", in suggesting that the Old Testament was written in ignorance of man's inherent immortality. That would require us to believe that God intentionally misled the ancients when He spoke through the prophets regarding the state of the dead:

Psalm 146:2      While I live will I praise the LORD:  
                         I will sing praises unto my God while I have  
                         any being.  
                         3      Put not your trust in princes,  
                         Nor in the son of man, in whom there is no  
                         help.  
                         4      His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his  
                         earth; In that very day his thoughts perish.

Ecclesiastes 9:5      For the living know that they shall die: but  
                         the dead know not any thing..

10      Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it  
                         with thy might; for there is no work, nor  
                         device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the  
                         grave, whither thou goest.

## **The Resurrected Christ**

Therefore neither Jesus nor Adam was conscious in death, and neither possessed the power to raise himself from the dead. From the time of His death on the cross the being Jesus Christ ceased to exist until He was restored to life by His Father, and the apostles are emphatic that it was God who raised Jesus from the dead:

Acts 3:15    And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead, whereof we are witnesses.

[also Acts 2:32; 4:10; 13:30; 32-37; Ephesians 1:19,20].

Nowhere in the scriptures is it said that Jesus raised Himself from the dead.

It is often asked, With what body was He raised? And the teaching of the apostles is consistent with the explanation given by Paul in Hebrews 2, that Jesus was made flesh and blood for the suffering of death (Hebrews 2:9; 14-17). That purpose having been accomplished, we find that Jesus was raised, not flesh like Adam but a spirit being like God. In 1 Corinthians 15:45, Paul contrasted the two natures:

1 Corinthians 15:45    So also it is written,  
The first man Adam  
became a living soul.  
The last Adam  
became a life-giving spirit.

Paul also affirmed that Jesus' human existence concluded on the cross. In Hebrews 5, verses 7 and 8, he said of Jesus,

Hebrews 5:7    Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and having been heard in that he feared;  
8    though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.

The use of this expression, "in the days of his flesh", implies that when Paul wrote these words, Christ was no longer "flesh", that is, no longer a human being.

## Separate Identities

That passage just quoted, speaking of Jesus' anguish in the garden of Gethsemane, suggests a relationship between Jesus and His Father that is only understandable if we see Jesus as separate from and subordinate to God. Jesus' desire was to be spared if possible from the terrible death that awaited Him, yet He overcame His fear in order to carry out His Father's wishes. Many times in speaking, Jesus distinguished between Himself and His Father:

John 6:38 I am come .... not to do my will,  
but the will of him that sent me.

Luke 22:42 ..not my will, but thine, be done.

There could be no clearer distinction drawn between Jesus and God than this separation of wills. It follows that statements of Jesus such as, "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30), and "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9), are not to be understood as gross literalities, but as describing in a figurative way their close and harmonious relationship, and the way in which Jesus' character resembled that of His Father. Furthermore, Christ's prayer for His disciples at the last supper expressed hope that they also might acquire that resemblance:

John 17:22 And the glory which thou hast given me  
I have given unto them;  
that they may be one, even as we *are* one.

## Christ in the Book of Revelation

As I said earlier, if we can see clearly what kind of being Jesus was during the "days of His flesh", that is, nothing less or more than a sinless man; and superimposed upon that, if we see that His relationship with God was truly that of a loving and obedient Son with His Father, as the Bible depicts it, with no mysterious union of identities, then we cannot misunderstand what is said in Revelation concerning the risen Jesus, because although Jesus is no longer a human being, the basic relationship with His Father has not changed.

Christ has been given all power in heaven and earth (Matthew 28:18), and will exercise that limitless power in God's stead with regard to the establishment of the Kingdom on earth and its administration. It follows that Revelation, speaking of Him in that role, accords to Christ some of the titles and prerogatives which we might see as properly belonging to God. For example, He is called "the Almighty" (Gk: '*the all-ruling one*') in

Revelation 1:8. This should not unsettle us, or distract us from the basic facts, because Jesus says also in Revelation 3:12,

He that overcometh, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out thence no more: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God, and mine own new name.

### **Christ's Pre-existence: John's Gospel**

I have left the subject of Jesus' origins till last, because it is the more, shall we say, obscure phase of His existence. At the last supper, Jesus prayed,

John 17:5 And now, O Father,  
glorify thou me with thine own self with  
**the glory which I had with thee  
before the world was.**

There are, however, very few direct statements in the New Testament to enlighten us on this matter. The beginning of John's Gospel, though, provides us with some insight into the matter of Jesus' pre-earthly identity. Not till verse 17 does John refer to Jesus by name, but instead calls Him "the Word". This is a direct translation of the Greek *Logos*, and like all the titles that He is given in the scriptures, including "Jesus" and "Christ", it is descriptive. The footnote to John 1:14 in the Diaglott is quite helpful in this regard:

[*Newcome* in his Translation of the New Testament remarks, "Jesus the Son of God, is called the Word, because God revealed himself or *his word* by him." The following singular Eastern custom may perhaps illustrate the phraseology of the first part of this chapter. "In Abyssinia, there is an officer named *Kal Hatze*; the *word* or *voice* of the king, who stands always upon the steps of the throne, at the side of a lattice window, where there is a hole, covered in the inside with a curtain of green taffeta. Behind this curtain the king sits; and speaks through the aperture to the *Kal Hatze*, who communicates his commands to the officers, judges, and attendants."

— *Bruce's Travels*]

How well this analogy lends itself to John 1:18:

“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”

### **In the Beginning Was the Word**

- 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
- 2 The same was in the beginning with God.

“..the Word was with God...” “..the Word was God.” If “the Word” means Christ, then we can see that these two statements, if both taken literally, contradict each other. The idea of someone being with someone else rules out the possibility, in our world at least, of him also being that other person. But the view enshrined in the decisions of the Council of Nicaea (AD 325) is that John 1:1 is a literal statement of something which is beyond our rational powers to understand, but in which we must have faith. These days, thankfully, we can question that edict without putting our lives at risk, but what test can we place on this verse to decide how it should be understood? Only to compare it with other scriptures: this is the one method by which we can qualify God’s word.

### **Revelation 3:14**

In Revelation, chapters 2 and 3, are letters addressed to seven churches in the Roman province of Asia, conveying Christ’s instructions to those churches. Each letter begins by describing its author, Jesus Christ, in a different way. The final letter, to the church in Laodicea, starts,

Revelation 3:14 .....These things saith the Amen,  
the faithful and true witness,  
the beginning of the creation of God.

One of the attributes of Christ is that He was created by God. The Council of Nicaea, having formulated its creed describing the nature of Christ, attached to it an anathema, or curse, upon anyone who dared to say that Christ was a created being. But here it is in Christ’s own words, given in vision to the apostle John: Jesus called Himself “the beginning of the creation of God”.

## **Colossians 1:15**

Revelation 3:14 is not the only verse that states plainly that Christ is a created being. Colossians 1:15 refers to Christ as “the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature” (KJV); or, as in the standard Revisions, “the firstborn of all creation”.

### **Theological Censorship**

But a problem has arisen in recent times concerning both these verses. Those of you who use certain modern translations of the Bible will realise what I mean if you consult them, because in the New International Version and some other versions published since, these verses read quite differently. There is no grammatical justification for the alterations; they are deliberate mistranslations, designed to bolster a theological viewpoint.

The simple fact that these two verses stood unchanged for three hundred and fifty years, through three major revisions of the English Bible, and during a time when the text of the New Testament was being subjected to the closest scrutiny, should warn us that the reason for these recent amendments is not grammatical but doctrinal. But rather than discuss the inaccuracy of these renderings here, I have prepared a more detailed analysis of the verses in a footnote appended at the end of this booklet.

And these are not the only instances. If I convey nothing else in this talk, I would like everyone to be aware that in critical areas of doctrine some modern translations of the Bible are not to be relied on.

### **The Word Was God**

Returning to John 1 with the knowledge that Christ was created by God, and therefore a being distinct from God, we are in a much better position to understand the first verse. We can now be sure that “the Word was with God, and the Word was God” is indeed a contradiction if both clauses are taken literally. “The Word was with God” - that is the plain statement. John almost tells us that by repeating it in the second verse:

“The same was in the beginning with God.”

It follows that “the Word was God” is meant be understood in a way other than an assertion that God and His Son share a mystical unity. The solution may be grammatical. In John 1:1, the Greek word *theos* (god) appears twice, but only once with the definite article. The Greek word-for-word is,

"IN BEGINNING WAS THE WORD AND THE WORD WAS WITH THE GOD AND GOD WAS THE WORD."

The final clause can also legitimately be rendered, “the Word was a god” and thus we see it in the Emphatic Diaglott.

‘Gods’ (plural) is occasionally used in the scriptures, more so in the Old Testament, of lesser beings than Jehovah: [from the Diaglott Alphabetical Index, item ‘God’: “In a subordinate sense, the term Elohim or gods, is applied to angels, and to judges or great men” (Psalms 97:7; Hebrews 1:6; Exodus 22:28; Psalms 82:1; John 10:34,35; 1 Corinthians 8:5).]

So we may understand this as a declaration of Christ having been a god, or ‘a great one’, alongside ‘the great One’, God Himself. This would remove the contradiction from John 1:1 while still permitting us to understand it in a literal way, the verse actually becoming a refutation of the idea that Christ is God.

### **An Alternative View**

The attractiveness of the above rendering is obvious, but we should also consider the possibility that “the Word was God” was not meant to be understood in any literal sense, but as a metaphor, describing Christ’s role as God’s agent. We may find this better suits the context, if we consider the subsequent verses,

John 1:3 All things were made by him; and without him  
was not anything made that hath been made.  
(See also Hebrews 1:2)

The first three words of this Gospel, “In the beginning”, are often taken to mean that beginning when God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1). If that were so, then “All things were made by him”, or “through him”, as in the Diaglott, might appear to be referring to a role played by Christ in that creative work, but the footnote to John 1:3 in the Diaglott gives us a rather different perspective on the word ‘made’:

[The Greek verb *ginomai* occurs upwards of seven hundred times in the New Testament, but never in the sense of *create*, yet in most versions it is translated, as though the word was *ktizo*. “The word occurs fifty-three times in this Gospel, and signifies to *be*, to *become*, to *come to pass*; also to *be done* or *transacted...etc.*”] - Diaglott

The same verb, *ginomai*, is used in verse 10 of our chapter:

John 1:10 He was in the world, and the world was made by  
him, and the world knew him not.

The “world” which did not recognise Christ was plainly not the creation spoken of in the first chapter of Genesis, and if we also take into consideration the verse which follows,

- 11 He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not.

Verses 10 and 11 clearly seem to be referring to Israel. Yet this ‘world’ is said to have been ‘made’ by Christ, or ‘through’ Him, as in the Diaglott. According to Dr. Strong, the Greek word *kosmos* (#2889), translated ‘world’, means ‘orderly arrangement’. So if ‘made’ really means ‘to be done, or transacted’ as in the Diaglott note read earlier, and we substitute these meanings in verse 10, we see that Christ ‘transacted the orderly arrangement’ which was Israel. The picture emerging is that of Christ having played an intermediary role in the establishment and nurture of the nation of Israel during its history.

It is a theme echoed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:

- 1 Corinthians 1:1 Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;
- 2 and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;
- 3 and did all eat the same spiritual meat;
- 4 and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of a spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

Looking again at John 1:3 with this thought in mind:

- 3 All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made.

That is, ‘all things were done (or *transacted* ) through him, and without him was not anything done that hath been done’. The passage is therefore not speaking of creation, but of God’s dealings with mankind, specifically Israel. How well this fits with the concept of Christ as the Word. The King Himself remains unseen, and the Word communicates the King’s commands to His subjects. This, I suggest, is the uniting theme of these first verses of John.

## **The Angel of His Presence**

From these writings of John and Paul we recognise Christ as having been the angel of God's presence who conducted Israel out of Egypt, who communicated God's commands to Moses, and guided Israel during their time in the wilderness (Exodus 3:2; 14:19; 23:20-22). This special connection which Christ had with Israel gives us quite a new perspective on a number of passages in the Old Testament, most particularly the references in Daniel to the heavenly being, Michael.

## **Michael the archangel**

In chapter 10, an angel, speaking with Daniel, refers to another spirit being, not present, as "Michael, one of the chief princes" (vs.13), and a little later as "Michael your prince" (vs.21); "your prince" meaning not just Daniel's, but Israel's prince. The high rank of Michael, and this unique relationship between Michael and Israel is confirmed in the prophecy of chapter 12,

- 1     And at that time shall Michael stand up,  
      the great prince which standeth for the children  
      of thy people....

That is, Daniel's people, Israel. And associated with Michael's 'standing up' is the resurrection of the dead:

- ...and at that time thy people shall be delivered,  
      every one that shall be found written in the book.
- 2     And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth  
      shall awake, some to everlasting life,  
      and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

This is remarkably similar to Christ's words in John 5:

- 26    For as the Father hath life in himself,  
      even so gave he to the Son also to have life in himself:
- 27    and he gave him authority to execute judgement,  
      because he is the Son of man.
- 28    Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that  
      are in the tombs shall hear his voice,
- 29    and shall come forth; they that have done good  
      unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done ill,  
      unto the resurrection of judgement.

Both passages prophesy of the same event, but there has been a change of name for the one exercising divine authority; no longer is it Michael, but Jesus Christ. To me, there seems little doubt that Michael was the name given to Christ in His Old Testament role as the *Logos*, or Word, of God. How appropriate that this mighty being, who on God's behalf had watched over Israel all those years, should become their promised Messiah.

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh,  
and dwelt among us.

We have touched on relatively few of the many scriptures that fill out the picture of who Jesus is, but they are some of the most important ones. They have given us the basic facts, which are the tools that equip us to understand whatever else the Bible may say about Jesus. But some may ask, Does it really matter? Is it relevant? Can't we be followers of Christ without delving into the technicalities of His relationship to God?

### **Christ Our Example**

Let me just say that there is something about which the New Testament writers are very clear: that in every respect Jesus Christ is our example (Matthew 11:29; 1 Peter 2:21-23 ). If we desire to follow Him, we must regard the way that He conducted Himself before God and men as our model of holiness. And it is made plain to us that we cannot emulate Christ outwardly without being like Him inwardly also. In Paul's letter to the Philippians, he pointed to something which Christ did as expressive of His attitude toward God:

Philippians 2:5 Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:  
6 who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men;  
7 and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross.

“Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus”. It was Christ's mind, that is, His thoughts, and the love He had for His Father which motivated His righteous conduct; and Paul was instructing the believers

that ultimately they must be motivated in the same way, that their way of thinking must become like Christ's (Matthew 22:37; John 17:22; Romans 12.2; Ephesians 4:23; Colossians 3:8-11).

It seems to me that there must be a connection between this and the truth about who Jesus is. He is our ideal, and if we are to properly relate to God we must understand how He related to God, because that is what guided His behaviour. We have to become like Him in mind. If we do not properly understand the relationship between Christ and God, how can we possibly understand and develop our own relationship with God? This issue is at the very heart of the Christian faith. It is vital. God must intend us to understand the facts of the matter, because they are not just theoretical, they are a practical necessity. The person we become may very well depend on who we believe Jesus to be.

## References

1. "The Two Babylons" - Rev. A. Hislop.
2. Encyclopaedia Britannica (1966): art. "Osiris".
3. Smith's Bible Dictionary: art. "Genealogy of Jesus Christ".

## FOOTNOTE

### Notes on Revelation 3:14 and Colossians 1:15

#### Revelation 3:14 in the New Revised Standard Version

The Greek word upon which the understanding of this verse hinges is *arche* (Strong #746), and Dr. James Strong gives its first meaning as “a commencement”. *Arche* appears 58 times in the New Testament, and in 40 of these places the King James Version translates it “beginning”, which is its primary meaning. “Origin”, as used in the New RSV, might not appear significantly different from “beginning”, and indeed in some contexts it is not. Walter Bauer’s Lexicon of the New Testament gives “origin” as a possible meaning of *arche* [1(c)], when used in an abstract sense, as in, for example, John 8:44 in the King James:

“... He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth ...”,

where the particular “beginning” is not specified. It is remarkable that in this and the other examples that Bauer cites (Matt.19:4, 8; 1 Jn.1:1), where the NRSV translators might have used “origin” with some justification, they have wholly followed the King James Version and used “beginning”. Yet they have chosen to use “origin” in Revelation 3:14, where *arche* is not used abstractly and the context should not allow that rendering. Their motive is fairly obvious, because to call Christ “the *origin* of God’s creation” gives “origin” the meaning of *originator* or *source*, and if Christ is ‘the source\* of God’s creation’, then He is the Creator Himself.

\* New American Standard Version margin

#### Revelation 3:14 in the New International Version

The NIV translators have taken a different tack, by rendering the phrase, “the *ruler* of God’s creation”. According to Dr. Strong, *arche* may also mean “chief” in certain applications, and we might be led to think that this justifies the use of “ruler” in Revelation 3:14, but such is not the case, as the following example demonstrates. In Luke 13:14, *archisunagogos* is translated “ruler of the synagogue”; here our word *arche* is compounded with the Greek word for synagogue. The literal meaning is ‘the chief person of the synagogue’, by implication the ruler. A person could not be ruler of the synagogue without also being a member of the synagogue, and that is the key: to be chief necessitates membership in the group. Pilate for a time ruled the Jews, but he could never have been chief of the Jews, simply because he was not a Jew. If in Revelation 3:14 *arche* had been inaccurately translated “chief”, making Christ “the *chief* of the creation of God”, it would still prove that Christ was part of God’s creation. “Ruler” in this place is manifestly wrong and deliberately misleading.

## Colossians 1:15

This verse has also attracted the attention of the censors. In the King James Version it refers to Christ as,

“the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature”,

or, as in the standard Revisions, “the firstborn of all creation”. Both NIV and New RSV translators have altered this phrase to “the firstborn *over* all creation”. In doing this they have supplied the word 'over', for which there is no corresponding word in the Greek text. The Greek words for 'all' and 'creation' are both in the genitive case, so that the phrase may be rendered, “the firstborn of all creation”, or “all creation’s firstborn”, but there is no grammatical justification whatever for “the firstborn over all creation”; the motive is purely doctrinal.

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