



Who Is He?

Jesus . . . said unto [the man born blind] . . . , Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? — John 9:35, 36.

For nearly 2,000 years the world has been engaged in reflection, debate and even violent confrontation over the existence and nature of Jesus Christ. The spectrum of belief has ranged from the mythology that claims his nonexistence, to his total humanity, to his total divinity, to his co-divinity and humanity as the Second Person of the Godhead. It is now time to articulate the diverging hypotheses regarding Jesus and then to focus on the astounding reality of who he is.

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A Myth

It is strange that so many have claimed that the very existence of Jesus Christ is a myth, a legend, a fable — in other words, that he never existed. For when all the biblical and extra-biblical evidence now available is gathered together, it explicitly confirms the existence of Jesus. In fact, there is more confirmatory evidence for the life of Jesus than for the Jewish scholar, Gamaliel, who lived at the same time. Tragically, atheists, deists and numerous other factions have misled themselves and have endeavored to mislead others.

A Lowly Human

While acknowledging the existence of Jesus Christ, many have contended that he was just an illiterate peasant, an artisan, or a workman seeking recognition.

The fact is that Jesus was born into a family of artisans, who at that time were regarded as middle-class. Jesus grew up in Nazareth, a suburb of the provincial capital of Sepphoris, where the Sanhedrin alternately convened and where education was required of all male offspring.

A Prominent Human

Some have contended that, while Jesus Christ actually existed, he was simply a teacher, philosopher, healer or miracle-worker. Others regard him as a rabbi, a prophet, or a messianic claimant like so many others in his time. Although there are elements of truth in these claims, Jesus did not minister to sustain command, possession and power structures. He ministered and then died and rose again to overturn all those concepts.

An Example of Deity

One of the most popular hypotheses is that Jesus Christ was actually a god disguised or hidden in human flesh. Docetics believe that Jesus had no actual human body. Some Gnostics believe that the divine Christ was imprisoned in a fallen human body, only to be liberated at Calvary. Other

Gnostics contend that he developed a god-consciousness that rose from the “ground of all being” to his “highest self.” Panentheists believe that Jesus was simply an example of the god who is *in* everything. Pantheists believe that Jesus was an example of the god who *is* everyone and everything. The truth is that Jesus was uniquely, solely and irrevocably “all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:9).

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A Participatory Deity

A popular misconception of orthodox Christianity regards Jesus Christ as one of three individual Persons representing the Godhead. This millennial misunderstanding stems from the failure to understand that the word *person* is actually derived from the Latin term *persona*, which means “mask.” This term was introduced by the Carthaginian church father, Tertullian (160?-230? CE), who knew that *persona* was the word for the mask that an actor wore on the theatrical stage. A single actor could thus represent different parties by changing his “persona” during the performance.

The One-and-Only God

Over the last 2,000 years many have referred to Jesus Christ with metaphors such as “Lamb,” “Shepherd,” “Door,” “Water” and “Fire.” Many of these

metaphors are drawn from the Hebrew Tabernacle/Temple setting and reflect the words of the Apostle John, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt [tabernacled] among us . . .” (John 1:14). The Hebrew Tabernacle/Temple was explicitly designed to symbolically represent God himself. In biblical times the earth and human beings were believed to be composed of the four elements — fire, water, earth and air. All of these were represented in the Tabernacle/Temple and portrayed God’s intended “becoming” as human.

The obscured fact is that Jesus Christ was, is, and always will be the One-and-Only True God. Again, as the Apostle Paul declared, “For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:9).

Furthermore, Jesus Christ repeatedly inferred and declared that he was, is, and always will be the “I AM” (e.g., John 6:35; 8:12; 10:7, 11). This is an explicit reference to his appearance at the burning bush, when he “said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you” (Exodus 3:14).

The term “I AM THAT I AM” is a translation of the Hebrew expression *’ehyeh ’asher ’ehyeh*. *Ehyeh* is derived from the Hebrew verb *hayah*, which has the triune meaning of “to be,” “to become” and “to effect.” In defining himself to Moses, God employed a verb rather than a noun, and that verb in Hebrew has the threefold meaning of being, becoming and effecting. The One-and-Only God thus has a threefold constitution and manifestation, which eventually emerged as “Father,” “Son” and “Holy Spirit.” Rather than constituting three different individuals, Jesus Christ as God is constituted as the Relational Self of Inner Being (Father), Outer Becoming (Son), and Mediating or Interactive Effecting (Holy Spirit).

The conclusion is that Jesus Christ was, is, and always will remain the One-and-Only God, who chose to manifest himself as human. God is not only the Creator; he also is the Recapitulation of all Creation. This God is always present with us, and at the appropriate (and imminent) time he will manifest himself Parousaically (Second Coming “enthronement”) and usher in his new Creation, made in the image of his own human resurrection. This Creation will not be subject to command, possession and power structures. Rather, it will receive all the gifts of God’s own self-emptying love, will rejoice in those gifts, and will return them to God by sharing them with all others.

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Conclusion

Oh, that mankind might eagerly understand, accept and celebrate Jesus Christ as the totality of the One-and-Only God, who irrevocably and noncontingently adopted humanity as his ultimate manifestation! As we reflect on this truth, let us rejoice in our hearts that the Human God not only walked the paths of Galilee, Samaria and Judea two millennia ago, but that he is now present with us according to his promise, “. . . [L]o, I AM with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:20).

Yes, the reality is that Jesus Christ, as the Ultimate Truth, the Ultimate Life, the Ultimate Peace and the Ultimate Authority, is already present with us. But because he is the Human God, he will not impose his open manifestation on us. Rather, he quietly invites us to accept and witness to the astounding reality of who he is (Philippians 2:5-8; Acts 1:8; cf. Deuteronomy 19:15; Matthew 18:16; 2 Corinthians 13:1). The Parousia (Second Coming) therefore involves a reciprocal response of faith, hope and love from humanity. Soon Jesus Christ will appear Parousaically (“enthroned”) and usher in a transformed Creation for all eternity.

. . . [T]he Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. — Numbers 6:24-26.

. . . [T]hen shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. — 1 Corinthians 15:54.

If you long for the appearance of the Risen One (Second Coming) and the transformation of all Creation, we invite you to forward this statement, with or without your comments, to as many loved ones, friends, neighbors and acquaintances as you find appropriate — and invite them to do likewise. (This can easily be done by using the “send this article to a friend” feature in the website sidebar next to this article.) “Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Revelation 22:20)!

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