

Jesus 101

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Summary

For over 2,000 years, the name “Jesus” has evoked many responses. Some think it’s a wonderful, powerful, holy name. For others it brings up feelings of hurt, fear, and confusion.

Was Jesus a...

- » Man? An ordinary, good man who helped some people and could rally a big crowd?
- » Myth? A legend or folklore who we’ve made up to make us feel better or to help explain some of the unexplainable aspects of life?
- » Messiah? Born of a virgin, fully man, fully God, sent from heaven to earth to reconcile humanity back to God?

When we consider Jesus historically, we find both Jewish and non-Jewish sources that testify to His existence. The Alpha resource listed below is a great starting point if you want to do a deeper dive on the historical evidence for Jesus.

THE BIBLE TELLS US ABOUT THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF JESUS

- Jesus was simultaneously fully man and fully God.

For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body.
Colossians 2:9 NLT

- Jesus is our perfect representation of the true character of God.

Christ is the visible image of the invisible God.
Colossians 1:15a NLT

- Jesus is part of what we call “God the Trinity” - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
 - » Though the actual word “Trinity” is not itself used in Scripture, we find the framework and evidence for the Trinity throughout the Bible.

And when Jesus was baptized, immediately He went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on Him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”
Matthew 3:16-17 ESV

- Jesus made a way for us to have a relationship with God.

Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me...”
John 14:6 NIV

- Jesus’ sacrifice atoned for our sins.

For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him.
John 3:17 NIV

For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that He has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.
Hebrews 9:15 NIV

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» See **Let's Discuss...Jesus PART 5_Was Jesus' Death Really a Sacrifice** for a bit more on atonement.

- Jesus came to give us eternal life.

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16 NIV

- Christ has always been and will always be present.
 - » John uses "The Word" (logos in the Greek) in some places to refer to Jesus. For example, John 1:14a NIV tells us, "The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us." He also says:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made. In Him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

John 1:1-5 NIV

THE BIBLE TELLS US ABOUT THE CHARACTER OF JESUS

- Jesus modelled a life of LOVE.
 - » We see this displayed in all of Jesus' words and actions throughout the Gospels. Every other key characteristic stems from His heart of love.
- Jesus made Himself available. These are just some of the many examples:
 - » In Matthew 14:13-21, when the disciples wanted to let the crowds go to find their own food, Jesus takes the time to miraculously feed them all.
 - » During His travels, Jesus constantly stops to heal people.
 - The two blind men: Matthew 9:27-31
 - The man with the shriveled hand: Mark 3:1-5
 - The demon-possessed man: Luke 8:26-39
 - The woman with the issue of blood & Jairus' dead daughter: Luke 8:40-56
 - The man by the pool who couldn't walk: John 5:1-15
 - » In Mark 4:35-41, Jesus wakes up from a good nap to calm the storm that the disciples were afraid of.
 - » Jesus often ate meals together with other people.
 - With tax collectors and sinners: Matthew 9:10-12
 - At Simon's house when the woman anoints Him: Mark 14:3-9
 - At Mary & Martha's house: Luke 10:38-42
 - At Zacchaeus' house: Luke 19:1-10
 - After His resurrection with the disciples: Luke 24:41-49
- Jesus tore down the veil.
 - » In Matthew 27:51, when Jesus died, the 60 ft. temple veil that separated the most holy place that only few religious leaders could access was torn from top to bottom. This is representative of not just a physical veil, but also our own personal internal veils - thinking we need to be perfect or achieve a certain standard in order to be accepted or access God. He made a way for us all to enter into His presence.
- Jesus publicly declared an anti-establishment, counter-cultural perspective.
 - » He openly challenged cultural norms and distorted mindsets that even the Pharisees and religious leaders had developed and were spreading at the time.
 - Touching a man with leprosy, who was considered ritually unclean: Matthew 8:1-4
 - Picking grain and healing on the Sabbath: Matthew 12:1-14
 - Associating and eating with sinners and tax collectors: Luke 5:27-32

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- Challenging their understanding of Jewish law/Scripture: Matthew 5:21-42
- Challenging culturally accepted mindsets: Matthew 5:43-48
- Turning over the money changers' tables in the temple: Matthew 21:12-13
- Jesus was inclusive towards all.
 - » The woman caught in adultery: John 8:1-11
 - » The Samaritan woman at the well who many would've looked down upon: John 4:1-26
 - » The thief on the cross: Luke 23:39-43
 - » He chose unlikely characters such as fisherman (considered not well-educated – Peter, Andrew, James, and John: Matthew 4:18-22) and a tax collector (Matthew: Matthew 9:9-13) as some of his closest disciples.
- Jesus abounds in grace.
 - » Jesus shows us that there is no scale when it comes to sin – all sin grieves the heart of God, and we have all sinned!
 - Romans 3:23 NIV says, *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”*.
 - » Instead of condemning people for their sin, He was quick to forgive, and sometimes even used it as a teaching point to help others stop and reflect, rather than judge.
 - Jesus forgives the adulterous woman and stops the Pharisees from condemning her: John 8:2-11
- Jesus was servant-hearted.
 - » In John 13:12-17, Jesus sets the example by washing His disciples' feet, much to their surprise. According to their cultural customs, they should have been washing His feet! He then goes on to tell them to do the same for others.

HOW DO WE LIVE THE JESUS WAY?

- It starts with repentance.

From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”
Matthew 4:17 NIV

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.
1 John 1:9 NIV

- Jesus is our cornerstone.
 - » By this we mean that Jesus is crucial to all facets of our lives. In Matthew 7 we see that He is the solid ground upon which we as Christians build our truth, values, perspectives, and entire lives upon.

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone...

Ephesians 2:19-20 NKJV, emphasis added

- Jesus is the lens through which we determine how to live.
 - » Jesus acted according to what He saw His Father doing. As Jesus' followers, we too see things through His heart of compassion and follow His commitment to obeying the ways of the Father rather than our own personal preferences.
- So Jesus explained, “I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by Himself. He does only what He sees the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, the Son also does...”*
John 5:19 NLT

- Jesus gives us strength through the Holy Spirit to follow Him.
 - » In John 14:15-31, Jesus explains how He did not “leave us as orphans” here on earth to figure things out on our own.

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He promised that the Holy Spirit would come to be a Helper and Advocate to those who love and follow Him.

And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you.

John 14:16 NLT

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

John 14:26 ESV

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

- The resurrection of Jesus is a key, unifying doctrine amongst all Christian denominations. As Christians, we believe it was a real event and it is the catalyst for our entire faith. The divinity and resurrection of Jesus is what sets Him apart from any other spiritual teacher in history.
- We believe that after being crucified and killed on the cross (Matthew 27:31-50, Mark 15:15-37, Luke 23:26-46, John 19:16-30), He was buried in a tomb (Matthew 27:57-60, Mark 15:42-47, Luke 23:50-55, John 19:38-42), and 3 days later rose from the dead (Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20) and is now still alive and seated at the righthand of the Father (Hebrews 1:3, 12:2, 1 Peter 3:22).
- Jesus fulfilled His own promise to rise from the dead and therefore solidifies His pledge that His followers would also experience eternal life.

Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.

John 14:19 NIV

- Jesus appears to the disciples after His resurrection and shows them that He is both alive again, and still bearing the scars from His crucifixion.

Then He said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe."

John 20:27 ESV

In this moment, Jesus is declaring both His power over sin and death, and showing us that as His followers, while we continue to live in this broken world, we too can be both wounded and resurrected to new spiritual life, all at the same time.

JESUS' INVITATION TO ALL

- Jesus lovingly invites each of us into relationship with Him. He won't force His way in. He waits patiently for our response, allowing us to choose freely.

Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest..."

Matthew 11:28 NLT

Definition

μετάνοια (metanoia)

repentance: a change of mind and heart flowing from a recognition of and deep sorrow for one's sins, and resulting in an active turning away from sin and toward God

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Let's Discuss...

- What is your initial, unfiltered reaction when you hear the mention of "Jesus"? What thoughts come to mind? What feelings rise up in you? Why is that your reaction? (Just consider your initial reaction, we'll delve further into this in **Let's Discuss... Jesus PART 1_Who is Jesus to You?**)
- Do you find the historical evidence (biblical or otherwise) for the existence of Jesus convincing? Why or why not?
- Are you confident in the divinity of Jesus, that He was both fully God and fully man? Why or why not?
- When you read John 14:6, what do you think Jesus meant by this?
- When you think about the characteristics of Jesus that we discussed, what are some of your favourites? Are there any that you find particularly encouraging to you personally, and why?
- What has been your response to Jesus' invitation to come to Him? Is there anything that holds you back from fully accepting that invitation? If you already have come to Him, have you found rest there?

Let's Pray...

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me..."
John 14:6 NIV

Open the eyes of their hearts, and let the light of Your truth flood in. Shine Your light on the hope You are calling them to embrace. Reveal to them the glorious riches You are preparing as their inheritance.
Ephesians 1:18 VOICE

- Let's ask the Holy Spirit to give us a greater revelation of who Jesus Christ is and how He wants to work in and through our lives. Ask Him to open the eyes of our hearts and remove any blinders (maybe misconceptions, negative experiences, wrong understandings) that hinder our view of who He really is and replace it with a clear vision of Him – that the light of His truth would flood in.

Let's Go Deeper...

- **Simply Jesus** by Tom Wright [book]
- **Knowing Jesus Through the Old Testament** by Christopher J. H. Wright [book]
- **The Antiquities of the Jews** by Flavius Josephus [book]
- **The Chosen series** by Dallas Jenkins [videos]
- **Alpha Film Series // Episode 02 // Who is Jesus** by Alpha [video]
 - » You can access this video (*big thank you, Alpha!*) through the Let's Go Deeper link at thediscipleshipproject.org/jesus - PASSWORD: AlphaUK
 - » If you would like to watch the entire series of Alpha, sign up to a course near you at <http://alpha.org.uk/try>