

May 12, 2024

MEET JESUS part 2 - Meet Jesus The Son

[Reader's Theater Style Presentation with Jim Hammond & Andrew Webb playing the parts of Saul (the Skeptic) and Chris (the Christian)]

Who Was Jesus?

I. MARK: The LORD, God's Son

Saul : I've heard it said that Jesus never directly claimed to be the Son of God. Isn't that a belief that was added later?

Chris: Actually, each of the Gospels presents Jesus as the Son of God, and that belief wasn't just added later. Let's take a look at the opening of the Gospel of Mark.

*Mark 1:2–3 (NIV) — as it is written in Isaiah the prophet: “I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way”— 3 “a voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for **the Lord**, make straight paths for him.’ ”*

He's quoting from Isaiah where a herald prepares the way for the LORD-all caps, YAHWEH's arrival, but John the Baptist points out that Jesus is the Lord we are preparing for.

Saul : That may be what Mark or even John the Baptist believed, but even then, he didn't directly say Jesus is the Son of God. He could be like God's representative or something.

Chris: Yes, but read what comes next in Mark.

*Mark 1:9-11 (NIV) "At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: **'You are my Son,** whom I love; with you I am well pleased.'"*

Saul : A voice from heaven? Like a loudspeaker?

Chris: Yes!, but it serves more like a spotlight shining on the the person who just took center stage, Jesus of Nazareth is identified by God's Voice as His very own Son.

Saul : Ok, that's something from Mark's Gospel, tell me something from Matthew.

II. **MATTHEW: "God with us"**

Chris: Matthew's Gospel helps a Jewish audience see that Jesus' birth fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy.

Matthew 1:23 (NIV) "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").

Saul : But that prophecy could just mean that Jesus is a special person, born of a young maiden, not necessarily a demi-god born of a virgin.

Chris: None of the Gospels present Jesus as a demi-god, half human half God. No, Jesus' own claims are far greater than that, and far more unique than pagan mythical ideas. For example, this is what Jesus said,

Matthew 11:27 (NIV) "All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."

Jesus claimed a unique relationship with God the Father, implying His divine identity.

Saul : A unique relationship? What does that even mean? Like a VIP pass to the pearly gates?

Chris: Kind of like that! It's like Jesus is the only one who has the backstage pass to heaven and decides who else gets in.

Saul : Yeah, but if you believe what I think you believe—that Mary was literally a virgin virgin—it sounds more like a myth than reality to me.

Chris: The Gospels are significantly different from ancient myths.

- First, they are written about events of history just decades after these events, and written by eyewitnesses or those connected to the eyewitnesses.
- Secondly, as it relates to the virgin birth narratives: There are obviously two sources for the same event being described. These unique yet complementary narratives suggest we are hearing directly from eyewitness sources.
- Many scholars believe that Luke, Paul's missionary companion, interviewed Mary herself while Paul was imprisoned in Jerusalem.
- The Gospels don't read like myths at all.

Saul : Wow, can you give me an example from Luke's Gospel?

Chris: Let's begin with Luke's account of Jesus' birth.

Luke 1:31–34 (NIV) — 31 You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end. 34 "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

Mary understands that she has just been told she will be the mother of the long awaited, forever king, descendant of David, the MESSIAH!

III. **LUKE: Son of the Most High whose kingdom will never end**

But then Mary asks "How can this be since I am a virgin?"

Luke 1:35 (NIV) "The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.'"

Saul : But the virgin birth seems irrational and illogical to me. So it makes it hard to believe even the source.

Chris: It's not irrational or illogical. If there is a God who made everything, the entire universe and everything in it, as Genesis 1:1 says, it's not irrational to think God could make one human in a different way. **In fact, it would be illogical to think he couldn't.**

Saul : Okay, so we've got God calling Jesus His Son in both Mark and Luke. But did Jesus Himself ever flat-out say, "Hey, I'm God's Son!"?

Chris: Well, He didn't use those exact words, but He made His identity very clear in many ways.

Saul : What about John's Gospel? Isn't it the most explicit about Jesus' divinity? I've heard that's why many scholars don't believe John wrote it—they say it was written much later, after the church had already developed its view of Jesus.

Chris: But as you can see from the other Gospels already, that is barking up the wrong tree. Already in the other Gospels these claims are clear. Besides, there's strong evidence that Jesus' disciple John, wrote it. John wrote it around 90 AD and he wrote because there were new heresies and false ideas about Jesus cropping up. And **surprisingly**, the first heresy in the church was not the denial that Jesus was God, but the opposite, the denial that the Son of God could become a man. This was a heresy with Greek Gnostic philosophical roots, and that's why John begins the Gospel the way he did.

Saul : What do you mean?

Chris: Let me show you in the way John begins his Gospel.

John 1:1-3 (NIV) "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."

And then, in

John 1:14 (NIV) "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

IV. JOHN: The eternal Word who became flesh

Saul : So what does that even mean and how does that answer the Greek heresy you were talking about.

Chris: Great question! The term "Word" (Greek: Logos) was a concept both Jews and Greeks could understand. For Jews, it referred to God's powerful self-expression in creation and revelation. His Word. For Greeks, it was a philosophical term referring to the reason or principle that orders the universe. John combined these two ideas to show that Jesus is the ultimate expression of God—the divine Logos—who existed from the beginning and became flesh to live among us.

Saul : So John is basically saying that Jesus is God in the flesh?

Chris: Exactly! John continues to emphasize his full deity. For example, John wrote in his introductory remarks:

*John 1:18 (NIV) "No one has ever seen God, **but the one and only Son, who is himself God** and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known."*

Saul : Wow, that's pretty direct. But what did Jesus himself actually say to make John believe he was the Son of God?

Chris: Great question, **Saul**. Jesus made a lot of claims that no mere mortal would claim unless he was crazy or deceitful. The thing is, his followers were absolutely convinced he was not crazy or deceitful. In fact, they were convinced he was good, and that God was obviously blessing his life with power and authority.

Saul : What kind of radical claims are you talking about?

Chris: For example

- **In John 6**, Jesus said, "*I am the bread of life.*" (John 6:35) He says this as if he is the source of life, and the one who can sustain life.
- **In John 8**, Jesus said, "*I am the light of the world.*" (John 8:12) He says this as if he alone can shed light on this dark and dying world.
- **In John 10**, Jesus said, "*I am the good shepherd.*" (John 10:11) Remember the famous Psalm 23 begins, "The Lord is my shepherd"... with huge promises about God's care. Specifically, Yahweh, by name, translated LORD, all caps. The LORD is ONE. The one and true God, is shepherd. Jesus claims what is attributed to Yahweh!
- **In John 11**, Jesus said, "*I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. ...*" (John 11:25)
 - He said this at a funeral, then raises the guy from the dead!
 - This had a polarized reaction. Many believed in Jesus, but the Jewish leaders were more convinced than ever he had to die!

In **John 14** only to the 12 disciples, Jesus said, "*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*" (John 14:6)

He explains this further.

John 14:7 (NIV) — 7 If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."

His disciples were completely confused by this.

John 14:8-9 (NIV) 8 Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." 9 Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

Jesus confuses them further when he said in **John 15**, "**I am** the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15:5)

Saul : Chris, you have to admit all of these statements seem rather obscure, and vague, and CONFUSING. Why didn't Jesus come out and say it like it is right up front. Why be so obscure all the time?

Chris: John actually tells us Jesus' answer to that kind of question. Jesus described it this way. He frequently said "*His hour has not yet come.*" or "*His time had not yet come.*"

Saul : How is that an answer?

Chris: Jesus knew that when his cards were laid on the table for others to see, His opponents would not believe him, and would kill him. He had to time every self revelation, and follow his Father's timing for his whole mission.

Saul : I guess that makes sense.

Chris: And, by the way, not all of his statements were obscure. Here is one of those less obscure statements.

John 10:30 (NIV) "I and the Father are one."

Saul : How did that one go over?

Chris: John tells us in his next sentence:

John 10:31 (NIV) "Again his Jewish opponents picked up stones to stone him."

Saul : So, why did his Jewish opponents have such a violent reaction?

Chris: They considered it their religious duty from God's Law in Deuteronomy to apply capital punishment upon people who blaspheme God.

Saul : So if I'm understanding you correctly, they think since he is claiming to be God, he is pointing everyone away from the one true God. Is that right?

Chris: Yes, that is what they believed. So, they think they are completely justified to kill him out of obligation to God's law.

Saul : So much for "*Sticks and stone may break my bones but words can never hurt me.*"

Chris: Uhh, yeah, no kidding! But let's not miss the main point. Jesus did claim to be God. And that's why they had him crucified.

Saul : Were they right? Was Jesus pulling people away from their Jewish faith in the one true God? I mean, if there is only one true God, how can a man claim to be God?

Chris: All the Jewish prophecies were veiled just enough in the Old Testament scriptures that things went according to God's sovereign plan.

Saul : Now, I'm really not tracking with you. Can we get back to the main claim that Jesus is the Son of God? That still bothers me. Something doesn't make sense. If there's only one God, how can a man claim to be God?

Chris: All of Jesus' claims show that Jesus shares the same substance or essence with God the Father, even though He's God's Son.

Saul : I hear your words, but that just sounds like gibberish to me.

Chris: **Saul**, just because God is a complex being that's hard to understand doesn't mean He doesn't make sense. He has revealed the plurality of his nature, from the beginning consistently.

Saul : But I just don't get it, it doesn't compute for me. How can God be one, if what you are telling me is that, God is Father, Son, and Spirit, as I've heard you say before. What's with all this "Trinity"

business? How can God be three persons or personalities and still be one God?

Chris: Ah, the Trinity. The ultimate head-scratcher—it is hard to understand.

Let's try an analogy:

God actually gave us an analogy of himself, when he made humanity, and I think its even an analogy for the Trinity.

*Genesis 1:26–27 (NIV) — 26 Then God said, “Let **us** make mankind in **our** image, in **our** likeness, ... 27 So God created mankind in **his** own image, in **the image of God** he created them; male and female he created them.*

Do you see how God's use of "us" and "our" could hint at the Trinity, even though it's not fully revealed until later? "*Let us make mankind in our image.*" When God created us in His image, He didn't make us gods. Instead, He made us reflections of His nature.

Just as God is a Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—humans have a triune nature as well: body, spirit, and soul (or mind). If you separate the inner me (spirit and soul) from the outer me (body), that's death, but there's something about me that still survives, according to God's revelation.

In the Garden of Eden, the relationship between humanity and God was intimate through God's Spirit—His very breath in us. But God's Holy Spirit departed from Adam and Eve, consequently from all humanity, when they sinned. Now, all humans are born spiritually dead, like Adam and Eve were after the fall. But God did something about it.

Just as God is a Triune God, humans have a triune nature, designed to be whole. But sin tore us apart, and Jesus came to restore us so we could become whole again, as God intended.

To do this, God sent His Son to become the perfect Adam and pioneer the way back to the Father. Jesus perfectly reflected God's image as the "New Adam."

- Jesus absorbed our sin.
- He experienced the judgment that humanity deserves: separation from God.
- From the cross, He cried out, "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*" (Mark 15:34, quoting Psalm 22:1).

His separation from the Father was a real sacrifice. He took the judgment of separation from God on our behalf. But God vindicated Him by his resurrection, and His perfect obedience makes our salvation possible.

The victory of His death means the death and burial of our sinful selves with Him, and the victory of His resurrection brings us new life filled with His Spirit. And this new life can begin now—we don't have to wait for heaven to experience it.

His resurrection assures us of our own resurrection to eternal life with God, even though we die. All of this is possible if we trust in Him and, by faith, accept what He has done for us.

Saul : So you're saying Jesus set aside His divine perks while on earth, so that he could represent us and do this for us, and defeat death for us, and make a way for us?

Chris: Wow **Saul**, it seems like you are beginning to understand who Jesus is! It sure takes me a whole lot of more words to say what you just said so well in a few short words!

Saul : Maybe I did say it a little bit like you did, but the whole Trinity thing—God the Father, Son, and Spirit, 3 in 1 business still sounds pretty confusing, to me. I just can't grasp how that's possible.

Chris: It can be confusing for sure. But like Augustine said way back about around 400 AD, "*If you can comprehend it, it's not God.*" Some aspects of God's nature will remain mysterious because, well, He's God.

Saul : Okay, I'll admit it—I still don't get it, but it makes a little more sense like it might be possible.

Chris: That's progress! Remember, understanding the Trinity isn't a prerequisite for faith. If it were, we'd all be in trouble. It's more important to trust in who Jesus is and what He's done for us.

Saul : You know, that actually does help a bit. Thanks for the chat, Chris.

Chris: You're welcome, **Saul**.

Meet Jesus
Part 2 - Meet Jesus The Son

SMALL TALK

1. If you could ask Jesus any question directly, what would you ask Him and why?

VIEWPOINT

2. **READ Mark 1:9-11.** How does this passage reveal Jesus' identity as the Son of God?
3. **READ John 8:58-59.** Why do you think the religious leaders reacted so strongly to Jesus's statement, "before Abraham was born, I am"? (see Exodus 3:13-14)
4. **READ John 1:1-3, 14.** How do these verses establish Jesus as both divine and human?

GETTING PERSONAL

5. Jesus claimed to be the Son of God and the only way to the Father. How does this shape your understanding of His role in your life?
6. In what areas of your life can you better reflect the character and nature of Jesus as the Son of God?

MAKING PROGRESS (THIS WEEK)

1. Identify one person in your life who might benefit from understanding Jesus more clearly as the Son of God. Pray for them. Look for an opportunity to share a truth you learned in this discussion or Sunday's message with them.