

Who is Jesus Christ?

May 16, 2021

Dn. Jacob Bush

Anyone who has children, grandchildren or is a child themselves I'm sure has heard the song, "Everybody oughta Know." No, I'm not going to sing it. It states, "Everybody oughta know, who Jesus is." The song then goes on to list some of the attributes of Jesus such as His being the lily of the valley. And, more importantly, that He died on the cross making us white as snow.

The question of who Jesus is was a hot topic during the first few centuries of the Church. There was much debate about His nature, His deity, and His humanity. The Apostles understood the answers to such questions. Naturally, because they were present with Jesus throughout his ministry. Even Matthias, who took Judas' place as an Apostle, which we read in our first reading from the book of Acts. He was with the other Apostles "all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us – beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us." Acts 1:21, 22.

However, there were some troublemakers present in the first century, and throughout the centuries after, that had other ideas about who Jesus is. Most of these revolve around the false teaching that Jesus was not both fully human and fully God. That teaching is a heresy. Heresy is defined as a teaching or belief that is contrary to orthodox teaching or belief. John wrote his letters to defend the faith from heresy, as well as to instruct the Church and encourage the people. And we will be looking at his first epistle, which we read today, as well as his gospel in just a moment.

But before we do, it is important to note that there are people today that teach the same heresies that were taught back in the first century. So, for example, Jehovah's witnesses deny that Jesus is God. They have no problem with the statement that Jesus was a man, but they deny His deity. Such belief is heresy. It is a lie! It is wrong! And actually, that is the same heresy that John was writing against. See? There really is nothing new under the sun as Solomon stated.

The truth is that Jesus is the Christ and is both fully human and fully divine. That was the teaching of the Apostles, who were all eyewitnesses of His resurrection, it was the teaching of the Church throughout the centuries since and it is the teaching of the Church today. Jesus Christ is fully God, the second person of the Trinity, and is fully man, having been incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary as is stated in the Nicene Creed.

If we want a more full and deeper explanation, we can look at the Athanasian Creed, which can be found in our prayer book on page 769. I will not bore you with in its entirety. But I will read the part that talks about Christ just to give some background before we look at our second lesson for today. And let me add that the reason for the detail of this creed, and the Nicene Creed too, was due to the heresies that were taught during the fourth century, which were developed from the first century.

Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he also believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the right faith is, that we believe and confess, that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man; God of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and man, of the substance of his mother, born in the world; Perfect God and perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting; Equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead; and inferior to the Father, as touching his manhood. Who, although He be God and man, yet he is not two, but one Christ; One, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the manhood into God; One altogether; not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ; Who suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead. He ascended into heaven, he sitteth on the right hand of the Father, God Almighty; from whence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

Compare that with the Nicene Creed, which states the same thing in more simple language.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through Him all things were made. For us and for our salvation He came down from heaven, was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake He was crucified under Pontius Pilate; He suffered death and was buried. On the third day He rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and His kingdom will have no end.

So, which would you rather say? The Athanasian Creed, or the Nicene Creed? We could ask, 'Why are they so long and detailed?' And the answer is because the more thorough they are the less room there is for misinterpretation. The Apostles did not have the Athanasian Creed or the Nicene Creed back in the first century. So, they responded to heresy either in person or with letters. Paul certainly addressed heresy in his letters, and John responded to heresy with his three epistles.

Before we look at John's epistle, what does Christ say about Himself? I think the best answer to that can be found in John's Gospel chapter 8:12-34 and then also verse 58. Jesus begins in verse 12 saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the light of life." What is true about light? Without it we cannot see what is really there. We cannot see the truth without the light. Now we can stumble upon the truth, at least in part. For example, say if it is nighttime and we walk into the living room and trip over a toy or step barefoot on a Lego (Ouch! Is there anything more painful?) we will realize that they are there. In the same way we can understand, at least in part, how the world

goes round, but the fullness of the truth is impossible to understand apart from Christ. We would not know God the Father if Christ didn't reveal Him to us. For example, we would not know that God created the world and hung it on nothing unless God revealed that to us, which he did in Job 26:7.

Verse 19, "So they (the pharisees) were saying to Him, 'Where is your Father?' Jesus answered, 'You know neither me nor my Father; if you knew me, you would know my Father also.'" So Here we have Jesus testifying that He and the Father are one, which He further stated during His high-priestly prayer which we read in John 17.

It is pretty clear to us what Jesus was saying. But it was not at all clear to the Pharisees, who, in verse 25 we are told, "were saying to Jesus, 'Who are you?' Jesus said to them, 'What have I been saying to you from the beginning?'" I preached on this at our Wednesday morning service, and I will reiterate now. 'From the beginning' is interesting wording. Jesus could have meant the beginning of this particular conversation. Certainly, He has been talking about who He is this entire conversation. Jesus could have meant the beginning of His earthly ministry. Certainly, throughout His ministry Jesus talked about who He is and showed who He is by the miracles. And even when his parents were looking for Him when He was twelve and was found in the Temple. Remember He said, "Didn't you know that I had to be in my Father's house?" (Luke 2:49).

Or Jesus could have been referring to the beginning of time. If we skip down to verse 58, we read, "Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.'" So, Jesus is stating that He is God. Now, God spoke through Moses and the prophets concerning the coming Messiah, who is God the Son, Jesus Christ. So, in effect, Jesus has been testifying about himself since the beginning of time. Do we see how the Creeds echo what is said in Scripture?

Do we understand the importance of knowing who Jesus is? Without right understanding we become prone to heresy. That certainly was the case in the first century and has been throughout the history of the world. And as I have already mentioned, that led John to write his epistles.

The main heresy that John wrote against was known as Gnosticism. Gnostics had many false beliefs but the one that is pertinent for today deals with their belief on who Jesus was. Gnostics believed that the divine Christ came on Jesus at His baptism and left before Jesus died on the cross. In this they deny that Jesus was the Christ. Incidentally, they also deny the virgin birth and the chief act of salvation. What they believed is a lie! The truth is that Jesus was the Christ from birth. Both fully human and fully divine. That He died on the cross for our sins, rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and is coming back! That is the Christian faith!

So, in verse 5 of his first epistle John states, "This is the One who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth." The water is a reference to Christ's baptism, which began His earthly ministry, and the blood is a reference to His death, which was His whole reason for coming in the first place.

John continues in verse 7, "For there are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement." Why three? Because in Jewish law "on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed" Deuteronomy 19:15. The Holy Spirit testifies to the truth that Jesus is the Christ, His baptism testifies to the truth that Jesus is the Christ, and His death testifies to the truth that Jesus is the Christ.

At His baptism, remember, John saw the Holy Spirit descend on Jesus like a dove and heard the voice of the Father saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." That clearly testifies that Jesus is the only begotten Son of the Father.

Also, His death testifies that He is the Christ because throughout the Scriptures, in particular the prophecy in Isaiah 53, it was prophesied that the Messiah would die in our place for our sins. And when we listen to the eyewitness accounts of the crucifixion that we find in Scripture it is clear that Jesus is the Son of God. Think of the earthquake that occurred upon His death, the curtain in the temple being torn in two from top to bottom. And the testimony of the centurion who stated, "Truly this man was the Son of God." (Mark 15:39).

And the Holy Spirit, of course, testifies that Jesus is the Christ because the Holy Spirit was promised by Christ, enables the Apostles to preach, teach, heal, etcetera, and is Himself the third person of the Trinity. Three witnesses confirm that Jesus is the Christ.

People accept three witnesses to confirm the validity of by far lesser things than this fact. Which John states in verse 9, "If we receive the testimony of people, the testimony of God is greater; for the testimony of God is this, that He has testified concerning His Son." This reminds me of when Jesus stated that the pharisees understand the signs of nature but do not recognize the signs of the times. Same vein of understanding. People are willing to accept temporal understanding but not true Spiritual understanding. Knowing that Jesus is the Christ is of greater importance than believing that it is going to be warm tomorrow.

Verses 10-12,

The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son. And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. The one who has the Son has the life; the one who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.

We who believe that Jesus is the Son of God are covered by His blood and have eternal life with Him. He came to give His life for us and for our salvation. And apart from Him we cannot be saved. This echoes what Paul wrote to the Colossians, that "our life is hidden with Christ in God When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory."

And because of who Jesus is, we have three things. Verses 13-15, "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life." That is blessed assurance of eternal life through Christ. "This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us." So, confidence that God has our best interests in mind. "And if we know that He hears us in

whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.” Answered prayer. Those are the three things we have because of who Jesus is.

He is the Christ. He is fully God and fully man. He is the only begotten Son of God the Father. He is Savior. He is Lord. As John wrote in Revelation Jesus is faithful and true. He is the King of kings and Lord of Lords. That is the truth! And because of Him we have the assurance of eternal life if we believe in Him. If, as Paul wrote, we confess with our mouths that Jesus is Lord and believe in our hearts that God raised Him from the dead, then we will be saved. (Romans 10:9) We have confidence that He hears us when we pray and answers our prayers according to His will.

May we never forget who Jesus truly is and what He has done on our behalf. May we never stop sharing Him with others. May we never stop standing up against the lies and never stop standing up for the truth, understanding that Jesus Christ is Savior and Lord. And He is the only one that can save.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen!