



What Makes This King Different?

Here is the great question of Christianity: A king went to his coronation, and was crowned with a crown of thorns, yet to this day he is still the king of all kings. Why? Why is he still king? Surely, it must have something to do with Easter.

Almost 2,000 years ago, Jesus entered the human race in a small Jewish community. He was a member of a poor family, a minority group, and he lived in one of the smallest countries in the world. He lived approximately 33 years, of which only the last three comprised his public ministry. Until that time he had been a carpenter. If he started his apprenticeship when he was 12, he would have worked as a carpenter for 18 years.

Yet people almost everywhere still remember him. The date on the morning newspaper, or the copyright of a university textbook give witness to the fact that Jesus lived one of the greatest lives ever lived. H. G. Wells, the noted historian, was asked which person had left the most permanent impression on history. He replied that if one judged a person's greatness by historical standards, "Then Jesus stands first." As the centuries pass, history and evidence have validated Jesus as the most influential person who ever lived on earth.

Ernest Renan said, "Jesus was the greatest religious genius who ever lived. His beauty is eternal, and his reign shall never end. Jesus is in every respect unique, and nothing can be compared with him. All history is incomprehensible without Christ." You cannot kill Jesus, because you can't kill God. Sure, there is a resurrection. Easter is not just a hope. Easter is the ultimate reality. You can't kill God. You might as well try to stop a tornado with a feather—as to think it will work to hang God, and good, and truth, and kindness, and love, and reason, and humanity on a cross and be done with it once and for all. Of course, it won't work. In 3 days, you will discover that you have only "fooled yourself." Easter is the truth that you "can't kill God."

What does make Jesus different? Who is Jesus Christ? Some people say he was a great religious leader. He certainly was a great religious leader, but he had to have been much more. Throughout history people have been divided over the question, "Who is Jesus." We have always had half the population laying out palms in his path, while the other half cry, "stop them!" Why so much conflict over one individual? Why is that name, more than the name of any other religious leader, a source of irritation? Why is it that you can talk about God and no one gets upset, but as soon as you mention Jesus, people so often want to stop the conversation, or become defensive, irritable, or angry?

How is Jesus different from other religious leaders? Why don't the names of Mohammed or Confucius offend people? The reason is that these others did not claim to be God, but Jesus did. That is what makes him so different from other religious leaders.

It didn't take long for the people who knew Jesus to realize that he was making astounding claims about himself. It became clear that his **own claims** were, that he was not just a prophet, a teacher, or a gifted person; Jesus obviously claimed to be God. For many people this was too exclusive, --too narrow for them to believe. Yet the issue is not what do we want to think or believe, but rather, who did Jesus claim to be?

A. H. Strong in his *Systematic Theology* defines God as the "infinite and perfect spirit in whom all things have their source, support and end." This definition of God is adequate for all theists, that is, all who believe in God. Theism teaches that God is personal and that the universe was planned and created by him, and that he sustains and rules it in the present. Christian theism adds an additional note to this definition: "and who became incarnate as Jesus of Nazareth."

The New Testament clearly presents Christ as God. The names applied to Christ in the New Testament are such that they can be applied only to one who is God. For example, Titus 2:13 says, "Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Christ Jesus." The Scriptures attribute characteristics to him that can only be true of God. Jesus is self-existent and said, "Before Abraham was / *Am*." Jesus had no cause --no beginning; he just "was." Only God has "no beginning." Neither does, "God have an end." Easter! You can kill a mere prophet --but, you can't kill God. Jesus had no beginning and He has no end. Easter! Yes, Easter!

He is also omniscient; he knows what is in people's minds and hearts. He is omnipotent; "All power is given to him, in heaven and in earth." He is the possessor of Life; John said, "In him is life and the life is the light of men." Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

Jesus also received honor and worship that only God should receive. Jesus himself said, "It is written, you shall worship the Lord your God, and serve him *only*." Yet Jesus received worship as God. Most of the followers of Jesus were devout Jews who believed in *one true God*; they were monotheistic, yet they too recognized him as God incarnate.

Because of extensive rabbinical training, Paul was less likely to attribute deity to Jesus, yet he wrote, "Be on guard for yourselves and all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which he purchased with his own blood." Once Jesus asked Peter who he was, and Peter said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." And of course there was the Roman guard at the cross who said, "Certainly this is the Son of God." Speaking of Jesus, the writer of the book of Hebrews said, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever."

Then we have the confession of the "doubter," Thomas, who after examining the marks on the hands of Jesus after his resurrection said, "My Lord and My God."

How did the Jews understand the remarks of Jesus 2,000 years ago in their own culture? John 5:18, "For this cause therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because he not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God his own father and making himself equal with God."

John 10:31-33 reports an incident: Jesus had said, "I and the Father are one." Then, "The Jews took up stones again to stone him." Jesus answered them, "I showed you many good works from my Father; for which of them are you stoning me?" The Jews answered, "For good work we do not stone you, but for blasphemy; and because you, being a man, make yourself out to be God." Yes, Jesus claimed to be God, and everyone knew it. There can be no question about the deity of Jesus Christ; he was God living among men. To doubt this, one must certainly doubt the Bible. One cannot truly believe the Bible without believing that Jesus is God.

Another time when the Jews took him to task for forgiving sins, and thus claiming to be God, he answered, "Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say to a paralyzed person, 'Arise and walk?'" The answer is that neither is easy, but there had never been anyone in all history who was able to say, "rise up and walk" who actually got a response. Therefore, "maybe this Jesus is God."

Now then, anyone can say "your sins be forgiven;" but, how many people have you seen going around saying, "rise up and walk" to the paralyzed. Forgiving sin is obscure; are they forgiven or not? Who can see if they are? "Rise up and walk" is plain; do they rise up or not? If they do, well, there is something different.

The point was that when Christ forgave sin, the forgiveness was just as real as the rising up to walk. He was not exercising a human prerogative. Since none but God can forgive sins, it is conclusively demonstrated that Christ, since he forgave sins, is God. Of course **we** can say, "I forgive you," but only if that person is one who has sinned against us. Jesus was forgiving sins that were committed against God; he had a right to do that because, as God, he was speaking for himself.

When Jesus was on trial the high priest put him under oath and asked, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" Jesus answered, "I Am." For that answer he hung on a cross.

Robert Anderson of Scotland yard points out, "No evidence is more convincing than that of a hostile witness, and the fact that the Lord laid claim to Deity is incontestably established by the action of his enemies. We must remember that the Jews were not a tribe of ignorant savages, but highly cultured and intensely religious people; and it was upon this very charge that his death was decreed by the Sanhedrin, their great national council, composed of the most eminent of their religious leaders."

The trial of Jesus was unique, for Jesus was not tried for his actions; Jesus was tried for his Identity. Jesus did not die on a cross because of what he did; he hung there because he was God.

In most trials, people are tried for what they have done; this was not true of Jesus. Jesus was tried for who he was. The trial of Jesus ought to sufficiently demonstrate that he confessed his divinity. His judges witnessed his confession. His enemies acknowledged that he claimed to be God.

"In the same way, the chief priests, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking him, and saying, "He saved others, he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him now come down from the cross, and we shall believe him; for he said, "I am the Son of God."

In three days Jesus arose; he has been with us ever since. "He is still the King of all kings." The crown of thorns was not the final crowning. He has continued to be crowned by countless generations since, "King of my life I crown Thee now --Thine shall the glory be; Lest I forget Thy thorn-crowned brow, lead me to Calvary."

The resurrection of Christ is to be expected –It is to be expected. Why? Well, you can't expect to kill God –God is eternal. He just won't stay dead. People only think that they have killed Him. You can't expect to hang TRUTH on a cross and get rid of it. It will still be truth when you are finished. O Sure, you can lie –but, that won't make the truth less true. You see, truth is "**what is.**" God is the life that is Eternal. Eternal is not going to go away. It will march on no matter what. You cannot "wipe out" good and God on a cross. It's not going to go away, just because someone wants it to –three days later, it will still be there. You can't expect to hang God on a cross –and think you can shut Him up. You're not wrong for believing in the resurrection. What else can you expect of the Jesus who is God?

Don't be too upset when it seems like evil and wrong are winning –just wait for 3 days, and you will see that they didn't. They didn't win. You're not wrong in thinking that some stuff seems bizarre –it is bizarre. It is crazy, there's no need to change your mind. Don't give up on the resurrection of truth and of good –don't give up on the resurrection of Christ. Easter is the most reasonable, the most logical, the most determined day on the calendar. There is no rock big enough to shut the door on Easter!

Jesus was different all right, Jesus is God. That is why Jesus can help us. That is what makes Jesus different, and that is why Jesus makes the difference. Don't trade Jesus for anything! –And, don't try to get the devil to help do the work of Jesus. Jesus will do very well without the devil. Now then, if you want to kill the church –**just stop following Jesus.** You will, then, have a church with no God. It is easy to see that what a lot of churches are doing has very little to do with "following Jesus." However, I'm just betting that God will do an "end run" around them –and in 3 days He will be back! SURE! HAPPY EASTER! That is why the "gates of hell" can never prevail against the Church. So long as the Church "**is Jesus**" you can depend on it. Let's just keep it that way. EASTER, God with us!