

The REAL Jesus

The VISION Newsletter / July 2014

Pastor E. Keith Hassell

Philippians 2:5–11 (NKJV) “⁵ Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. ⁹ Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹ and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Everyone seems to have an opinion about “Jesus”. A search of the bookstores and internet reveals endless differing portrayals of Jesus. Does it really matter what a person or a religious sect believes and teaches about Jesus as long as they claim to believe in “Jesus”?

According to Jesus, what a person believes about Him is of utmost importance. In Matthew 16:13-19 we have the account of Peter’s great confession. The account begins with Jesus asking His disciples, “*Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?*” The disciples answered, “*Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.*”¹ If Jesus had asked this question today the disciples might have answered, “The Jehovah-Witnesses say You are Michael the archangel—a created spirit being; the Mormons say that You, along with your brother Lucifer, are spirit offspring of god and his goddess wife; modalists such as the Oneness Pentecostals say that You are God the Father; the Jews say that You are just another Jewish rabbi; the Moslems say that You are one of Allah’s prophets, superseded by Mohammed; and the Hindus say that You are an ascended master guru.” Then Jesus asked His disciples, “*But who do you say that I, the Son of Man, am?*” Peter confessed, “*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*” In response to Peter’s confession Jesus said: “*Upon this Rock [this revelation and confession of who I AM] I will build My Church.*” The church is built upon the one and only foundation of the *real* Jesus—the foundation of a right *Christology* (doctrine of Christ).² If we get the Jesus of the Bible wrong then we get salvation and the church wrong.

Throughout history people have attempted to give Jesus a “makeover” to fit their own religious beliefs or personal preferences. But by changing the Jesus of the Bible we create “another Jesus”. Paul said, “*But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches **another Jesus** whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it!*”³ John the apostle said, “**Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God.** He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.”⁴ What we believe about Jesus is a serious matter. We are not to fellowship with those who promote another Jesus lest we share in their evil deeds. Embracing the real Jesus is the foundation of salvation, the church, and Christian fellowship.

The Bible uses different designations to help us understand the nature of the real Jesus. In general, when speaking of His deity the Bible refers to Jesus as “the Word” or “the Son of God”. When speaking of His humanity it refers to Him as “Jesus of Nazareth”. When speaking of His role as Redeemer it refers to Him as “the Christ.” When speaking of His sovereign power and authority it refers to Him as “Lord.” When it speaks of the mysterious union of the divine and human nature, it refers to Him as “the Son of

¹ Matthew 16:14

² 1 Corinthians 3:11

³ 2 Corinthians 11:3-4 NKJV

⁴ 2 John 9–11 NKJV

Man.” Christian theologians accurately refer to Jesus in this mysterious union of deity and humanity as “the God-Man.”⁵

The Scriptures teach that the real Jesus eternally pre-existed as “the Word” prior to the creation of the heavens and the earth and prior to His Incarnation (coming into this world in human form): “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*”⁶ “The Word” identifies Jesus Christ as Deity. Jesus is the Son of God and the Son of God is the Word.⁷ The Word pre-existed with God (the Father) and as God. Jesus said, “*I and My Father are One.*”⁸ He eternally existed in the presence of God, in relationship with God, and in fellowship with God.⁹ There was never a time when the Word was not. He did not *become*—He already was. He is “I AM.”¹⁰ He was and is and always will be the Lord from heaven.¹¹

The Scriptures teach that the *real* Jesus—as the Word—pre-existed as the Creator. There is absolute distinction between the Word and creation. He was not created—He is the Creator of all things: “*All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.*”¹² “*He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.*”¹³ “*By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and all of them by the breath of His mouth.*”¹⁴ There is nothing created that does not owe its existence to Him. There is nothing created that does not depend upon Him for its continued existence.¹⁵ Although the Word entered into His creation through the Incarnation,¹⁶ He Himself was never created.¹⁷

The Scriptures teach that the *real* Jesus pre-existed as God and was in the *form* of God.¹⁸ Jesus called men to believe in Him just as they would believe in God.¹⁹ Prior to His Incarnation, Jesus existed in heaven as God. Since God is Spirit, the form of God is Spirit.²⁰ In the same way, Jesus, as the Word, pre-existed as Spirit.

The Scriptures teach that the *real* Jesus is equal with God.²¹ The relationship between God the Father and God the Son is horizontal, not vertical.²² Although Jesus became subordinate to the Father for the sake of redemption, He remains equal with Him in deity because He is God.²³ The Christian doctrine of the Godhead is called the Trinity that affirms that there is *One God* in three *Persons*—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (*Not three manifestations* of one person)

The Scriptures teach that the *real* Jesus is the Word come to earth as God incarnate (in human flesh).²⁴ Anyone who claims that Jesus did not come in the flesh is not of God.²⁵ How is it possible for the Creator God to take on the form of His creation—even the form of a man? Philippians 2:7-8 explains how it became possible. Jesus, as God, had to make Himself of no reputation. (Literally, “Jesus emptied Himself”) The Incarnation could only take place through a great act of humility. Jesus laid aside His kingly robe of glory and put on the impoverished garment of human flesh. Jesus did not empty Himself

⁵ 1 Timothy 3:16

⁶ John 1:1 NKJV

⁷ Luke 1:35; John 1:14

⁸ John 10:30 NKJV

⁹ 1 John 1:2-3

¹⁰ John 8:58

¹¹ 1 Corinthians 15:47; Revelation 1:4; 4:11

¹² John 1:3 NKJV

¹³ John 1:10 NKJV

¹⁴ Psalm 33:6

¹⁵ Hebrews 1:3

¹⁶ John 1:14

¹⁷ Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 1:16, 17; Hebrews 1:2

¹⁸ John 1:1; Philippians 2:6

¹⁹ John 14:1

²⁰ John 4:24

²¹ Philippians 2:6; John 5:18; 8:58

²² Hebrews 8:1

²³ John 5:18; Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 1:8

²⁴ John 1:14

²⁵ 1 John 4:3

of His deity. Jesus did not exchange His deity for humanity. Although Jesus laid aside the *expression* of His deity, He never for a moment lost *possession* of His deity. Of what, then, did Jesus empty Himself? He emptied Himself of His divine *privileges*: He became a bondservant of God the Father. He emptied Himself of His divine *prerogatives* (He limited His right to know): He grew in wisdom and stature. He emptied Himself of His *riches* in heaven: He became poor that we might be made rich. He emptied Himself of His *shared glory* with the Father in heaven: Jesus prayed that the Father would restore to Him the glory that He shared with Him before the world was made.²⁶ He emptied Himself of His *right to justice* in trial: He could have called twelve legions of angels to rescue him. Jesus even emptied Himself of His *fellowship* (*not relationship*) with the Father on the cross. Jesus cried, “*Father why have You forsaken Me?*”²⁷

In His Incarnation, Jesus took on the form of a bondservant. As a bondservant, Jesus came to do the will of God the Father who sent Him.²⁸ Jesus was the prophetic fulfillment of the Servant-Messiah prophesied by Isaiah.²⁹ Jesus as God possessed a servant’s nature but then took on the position of a servant.³⁰ As God He owned everything but as a servant He lived as if He owned nothing—not a crib, not a bed, not a house, not a boat, not a donkey, and not a tomb. Jesus is our supreme example of servant-hood. He did not come to be served but to serve.³¹

The Scriptures teach that the *real* Jesus came in the likeness of men. In taking on human flesh He gave visible expression to the will and nature of the invisible God.³² In taking on human flesh, He was able to die as a sacrifice for sins and thus through death destroy the power of the devil. Because Jesus took the form of man, He became the God-Man. As such He became a faithful High Priest between God and man.³³ Because of His exaltation and glorification, Jesus has been appointed by God the Father to be the just Judge of all mankind.³⁴

The Incarnation of God in human flesh is a mystery.³⁵ In becoming Man, Jesus did not *lose* anything within His deity; rather He *added* humanity to His deity. As the God-Man Jesus Christ is *fully God* and *fully Man*.³⁶ Jesus as the God-Man is the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Second Person of the Trinity, the eternal Word made flesh. Jesus is not half God and half man. He is fully God and fully Man. Jesus is not a man who had God in Him. Jesus is not merely a man who “manifested the God principle.” One of Jesus’ names is “Immanuel” that means “God with us.”³⁷

As the God-Man, Jesus has two distinct natures: divine and human. And yet Jesus is not a double being—one human and one divine. He is not a compound being—part human and part divine. The divine and human natures are not “mixed together” so that they are no longer distinguishable. Rather Jesus’ two natures were joined together through the Incarnation into one new permanent “God-Man” nature in the Person of Jesus Christ. The divine and human natures are easy to distinguish but impossible to divide.³⁸ This oneness of two distinguishable natures in one Person is known as the *Hypostatic Union*.

One of the most common errors among cults is to confuse the two natures of Jesus Christ. Jehovah Witnesses assert Jesus’ humanity but deny His deity. Islam also accepts Jesus’ humanity but denies His deity. Christian Science asserts Jesus’ deity but denies His humanity.

²⁶ John 17:5

²⁷ Matthew 27:46

²⁸ John 4:34

²⁹ Isaiah 52:13-14

³⁰ Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45; Luke 12:37; John 13:2-17; Philippians 2:7

³¹ Matthew 20:27, 28; Mark 10:45

³² Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:3; John 14:7-9

³³ Hebrews 2:14

³⁴ John 5:22; Acts 17:31

³⁵ 1 Timothy 3:16

³⁶ Luke 3:38

³⁷ Matthew 1:23

³⁸ In His divine nature Jesus could not be tempted but in his human nature He was tempted in every way as we are. As God He came to do the Father’s will but as man He prayed for “Not my will but thy will be done.” (James 1:13; Matthew 4:1; Hebrews 4:15; Luke 22:42)

The Scriptures teach that Jesus is the exalted heavenly Man. Jesus did not lay aside His humanity when He rose from the dead.³⁹ Jesus' physical body was resurrected in a glorified state.⁴⁰ Paul calls Jesus "the heavenly Man".⁴¹ "Heavenly" speaks of His deity; "Man" speaks of his humanity. Jesus is even now seated at the right hand of God in His glorified human body as the God-Man: "*For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,*"⁴² As the heavenly Man, Jesus mediates as High Priest between God and men.

Yes, it matters what you and I believe about Jesus. It matters what we believe about the Incarnation of God into human flesh. Don't be fooled by those who peddle another Jesus. The Christian faith is built upon the foundation of the *real* Jesus. The real Jesus is the foundation of our faith, of the church, of our fellowship, and of our worship.

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Charles Wesley

Hark! The herald angels sing
'Glory to the newborn King;'
Peace on earth and mercy mild;
God and sinners reconciled.'
Joyful, all ye nations rise,
Join the triumph of the skies;
With angelic host proclaim,
'Christ is born in Bethlehem!'
Hark the herald angels sing,
'Glory to the newborn King.'

Christ by highest heav'n adored,
Christ the everlasting Lord:
Late in time, behold Him come,
Offspring of a virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,
Hail the incarnate Deity!
Pleased as man with men to dwell,
Jesus our Immanuel.
Hark! the herald angels sing,
'Glory to the newborn King.'

Hail the heav'n born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Sun of righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings,
Ris'n with healing in His wings.
Mild He lays His glory by,
Born that man no more may die,
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth.
Hark! the herald angels sing,
'Glory to the newborn King.'⁴³

© Edward Keith Hassell
Grace Fellowship
P.O. Box 260
Rusk, Texas
(903) 683-6550
www.gracefellowshiprusk.com

³⁹ Luke 24:39

⁴⁰ Philipians 3:21

⁴¹ 1 Corinthians 15:48-49

⁴² 1 Timothy 2:15

⁴³ *Logos Hymnal*. 1995 (1st edition.). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.