

Jesus: Man and God

Do You *Really* Understand?

All of us want to be understood. We want to know that others have some idea of what it feels like to be the particular person we are. So basic is this human desire that there are several familiar sayings that express it, such as “Before you criticize others, walk a mile in their shoes” and “Don’t judge a book by its cover.” A recent popular book says that women and men have trouble communicating with each other because, as the title puts it, *Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus*. In other words, men don’t understand what it feels like to be a woman, and women don’t understand what it feels like to be a man. One of the best things that can happen to us in life is to find another person who fully understands us and loves us as we are.

For many of us, this comes through the family. More than anyone else in our lives including our best friends, our families know us, love us, and accept us. The church has always valued family for this reason. And for those who do not have good family relationships—in fact, for everyone—the church can be the loving family which people need.

The most radical claim of Christianity—the claim that sets it apart from all other beliefs—is that God really understands. He understands because his Son Jesus Christ lived as a human being and shared our life in every single aspect except sin. Nowhere outside of the Christian faith will you find the teaching that the creator would humble himself and become like his creatures because he loves them so much and wants to save them from self-destruction. (We’ll say more about that later.)

Jesus Christ was a Real Person!

The New Testament tells us a lot about the life of Jesus. It shows how he shared our life completely. Take a look at the list of common human experiences below on the left. Read the Bible passages listed on the right, which tell about times when Jesus experienced these things. Match them up by putting a letter from the right-hand column in the correct space in the left-hand column.



Experience:

1. Weariness _____
2. Talked about behind your back _____
3. Lack of “success” _____
4. Enjoyment of food and wine with friends _____
5. Disappointment _____
6. Enjoying the company of children _____
7. Family responsibility _____
8. Betrayal by one who claimed to be a friend _____

Bible Passage:

- a. *Luke 7:33-34*
- b. *Luke 18:15-16*
- c. *John 19:26-27*
- d. *Mark 6:1-6*
- e. *Mark 14:32-37*
- f. *Matthew 26:31-35, 69-75*
- g. *John 2:1-3*
- h. *Mark 6:30-32*

GENESIS

EASTER



Your Thoughts, Please

The church sees the resurrection of Christ as a new beginning for all people. Christ's resurrection wipes everybody's slate clean by overcoming the power of death to kill us forever. Just as we take part in a death like his, we will take part in a resurrection like his. This is why Easter is a kind of new Genesis. So during the Easter season, one of the Bible readings is always **John 1:1-18**. The passages we looked at earlier told us about Jesus' human life. This passage tells us about his divinity. It tells us about the beginning of God's plan to send his Son to save us.

Write down some of the things these verses from John's Gospel tell us about Jesus Christ and about God's plan for our salvation.

A Unique Message

People often say that it really doesn't matter what religion you are, because all of us believe in God. Yet Christianity, as we mentioned earlier in this session, has a unique message: The creator of all things *became one of us* to show his saving love for us. He *is* God, and he became one of us not for his own sake but for ours.



For every other religion, the idea that God would become like one of his own creatures is shocking and unthinkable.

Some examples:

Read **John 10:31-39**. Why does Jesus get in trouble with the Jews here? Because he claims to be God. For the Jewish people, the Messiah will be a chosen person, not God himself becoming man. (Yet many converted to Christianity because of the things Christ did for them and showed to them.)

Here is a passage from the Koran, the holy book of the Moslem faith:

"This revelation, and this wise admonition, we recite to you. Jesus is like Adam in the sight of Allah. He created him of dust and then said to him: 'Be,' and he was." (*The Imrans, 3:55*)

Is this a description of Christ as we know him?

Here are the words of a former Jehovah's Witness:

"The Christ of the Jehovah's Witnesses is different from the biblical Christ. . . . They will concede that he is the Son of God, but it is thought to be blasphemous to say that he is God."

From *We Left Jehovah's Witnesses: Personal Testimonies*
Edmund C. Gruss, ed.

In other faiths, too, you will find things that tell you the Christian message is unique.

A theologian of our church said, "A God who is not willing to enter into our life is not a God worth having." Do you agree with this statement? What difference might it make in people's lives?

Good News!

The Messiah's Message ...

At the beginning of his public ministry, Jesus revealed himself as the one of whom Isaiah spoke.

And [Jesus] came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and he went to the synagogue, as his custom was, on the sabbath day. And he stood up to read; and there was given to him the book of the prophet Isaiah. He opened the book and found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

Luke 4:16-21 (NIV)



Jesus "went on through cities and villages, preaching and bringing the Good News of the Kingdom of God" (*Luke 8:1*).

Jesus Christ assumes our human nature so that we might "become partakers of the divine nature" (*2 Peter 1:4*). He accomplishes this by *his resurrection*, that singular victory which makes the resurrection of humanity possible by destroying, once and for all, the wedge which sin had driven between God and his people.

And *this* is the *Good News* which the church, some two thousand years later, *still proclaims!*

What are some things you can do to make the *Good News* known to others?