

What Everyone Should Know About Jesus

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Introduction.

- A. Sometimes as we're driving down the road, we'll be behind a car that has a little insignia on the bumper. This insignia is a line drawing of the fish, with what looks like our letters "IXOYE" written in it. Just about all of us know it has something to do with Jesus, but hardly anybody has any idea what it means—probably including the owner of the car. Actually, those letters aren't English at all. They're from the Greek alphabet, and if we transliterated them into English, they would spell out the word "ichthus," which is the Greek word for "fish."
- B. But what does any of this have to do with Jesus? The answer to that goes back to the early church, when gospel preachers would use the fish shape and the word "ichthus" as a memory aid for a sermon about Jesus. Just like preachers today use acrostics in their sermon, "ichthus" is an acrostic. The "I" is the Greek letter iota, which is the first letter in the Greek version of the name "Jesus." The X-looking thing is the letter chi, which makes a "ch" sound and is the first letter of "Christos," the Greek version of "Christ." The "O" with the squiggle inside it is a theta, which is a "th" sound, and is the first letter of "Theou," which is the possessive form of the Greek word for "God." The "Y" thing is an upsilon, the Greek "U." It begins the word "Uios," which means "Son." Finally, the "E" is the Greek letter sigma, their "S." It's the first letter of the Greek word "Soter," which means "Savior." When you put it all together, you get an outline for a sermon about Jesus, who is the Christ, the Son of God, and the Savior. The next time you see it on a car, think of that.
- C. Obviously, this is not an acrostic we can use today. In English, JCGSS doesn't sound like much of anything except maybe a government agency. However, just like Christians in the first century did, we still need a way to convey basic, important information about Jesus. That's what today's lesson is for. It's built around eight simple Scriptures that any of us can use to teach someone else about our Lord. Let's spend the next few minutes today, then, learning what everyone should know about Jesus.

I. Jesus' Nature.

- A. At the head of this list come a couple of essential things about Jesus' nature. First, everyone should know that **HE IS THE SON OF GOD**. Of course, this is one of the central ideas of the entire Bible, which means that it comes under attack from everyone who doesn't like the Bible. In fact, just a few years ago, one of the professors at a college supported by institutional churches of Christ ruffled some feathers by arguing that Jesus was nothing more than an illegitimate child of Mary. We hear the truth about this idea from Jesus' own lips in **MATTHEW 26:63-64**. In the entire history of the world, there are few statements that are more significant. The fact that Jesus made this claim at all disproves the whole "Jesus was just a good man" way of looking at Christianity. Because Jesus said He was the Son of God, one of three things must be true of Him. Jesus is either a liar, in which case we should ignore Him, a lunatic, in which case we should also ignore Him, or He is Lord, in which case we must obey Him. By claiming to be the Son of God, He leaves no middle ground.
- B. Similarly, it is also true of Jesus that **HE IS GOD**. Just as the Father is God, so too Jesus is God. This idea is also one that gets attacked quite a bit, but for some reason, the attacks come from those who claim to be followers of God. They say that rather than possessing the full attributes of deity, Jesus is inferior to the Father. Some have gone so far as to say that He is nothing more than Michael the archangel.
- C. This attitude, though, is completely at odds with the way that the Bible tells us to regard Jesus. Look at what Paul says of Jesus in **COLOSSIANS 2:9**. All the fullness of Deity dwells in Jesus. That means that Jesus possesses all the attributes of God to the greatest extent possible, and did so even when He wore a human body. I'm not smart enough to unravel all the implications of that, but I do know this. I do know that just as possessing all of the characteristics of a man makes me fully human, so too possessing all the characteristics of divinity makes Jesus fully God. If that's true of Jesus, then we need to treat Him like it. We owe Jesus the reverence that is due God, the worship that is due God, and above all, the obedience that is due God.

II. Jesus' Life.

- A. Now that we understand who Jesus is, we can also understand the significance of His life on earth. This began, of course, when **HE CAME TO EARTH**. John describes this in **JOHN 1:14**. This is certainly an idea that's hard for us to grasp. We marvel sometimes at how pop stars and politicians can undergo catastrophic falls from public favor, but no one has ever descended farther. Jesus had it all. He was the equal of God, enthroned in heaven with God, but He left it all to come to earth and live the life of an ordinary human being. Stranger still is that where most humans go down kicking and screaming, Jesus left all of His glory behind voluntarily. God asked Him to give it all up, and Jesus humbled Himself totally.
- B. That humbling is why we see the lesson on Jesus appear in Lesson 4 of this series instead of Lesson 2. As we saw last week, sin is a massive problem for every member of the human race, a problem that will destroy

every one of us if we let it continue unchecked. God, of course, is omniscient. When He created mankind, He didn't overlook the presence of that fatal flaw. Instead, the Scripture tells us that from before the foundation of the world, God had a plan to save mankind, a plan that began with the birth of Jesus.

- C. Now, when I said just a moment ago that Jesus came to earth as an ordinary human being, that's not entirely true. In one sense, it is. The Bible tells us that Jesus was just as outwardly ordinary as He could be. None of us, on the basis of looks alone, could have picked him out of a lineup. However, inside, He contained that divine nature, and because of the goodness within Him, **HE LIVED A SINLESS LIFE**. That's what the Hebrews writer reveals in **HEBREWS 4:15**. Jesus, just like all of us do, constantly faced in His life the choice between doing right and doing wrong. Unlike us, though, Jesus never blew it. He never even once did anything that God didn't want Him to do. This is important for two reasons. In the first place, it shows that each one of us is guilty of sin because it was possible for us to always do right. Second, though, because Jesus never sinned, He was never stained by the guilt of sin. He was and is unblemished and perfect.
- D. Now, we might think that people would love and treasure Jesus for being so perfectly, immaculately good, but that wasn't the way that things worked out. Instead, **HE WAS CRUCIFIED** even though He hadn't done anything wrong. This is the accusation that Peter hurls at his audience on the day of Pentecost in **ACTS 2:23**. The Roman and Jewish authorities took Jesus and nailed Him to a cross to die. They succeeded in their aim, too. The Roman legionaries who crucified Jesus knew their job. The only way Jesus was coming down from that cross was if He was dead first, and that is the way He came down. Like all men do, Jesus died.
- E. When we think about it, in some ways, this is even stranger than Jesus being born. How can an all-powerful God be killed? We see the reason why in this verse. The Jews and Romans didn't know it, the devil who was guiding them didn't know it, but all of those enemies of God who thought they were thwarting God were actually carrying out His plan exactly as He wanted them to. Just as an event by itself, the death of Jesus the Creator at the hands of His creation is the most significant in human history, but that death had consequences that were even more profound. The death of One would soon be life for everyone.
- F. As tragic an event as the Crucifixion was, the story of Jesus didn't end on the cross. **HE WAS RAISED FROM THE DEAD**. This is what Paul wants us to understand in **1 CORINTHIANS 15:3-4**. Just as Jesus was indisputably dead, so too was He indisputably resurrected. As Paul continues on to say, more than 500 people who weren't expecting to see Christ, spoke with Christ, or ate with Christ after He arose.
- G. There are two main things that we need to take from this. First of all, the resurrection establishes beyond doubt that Jesus is the Son of God. There are lots of people out there who are a little off in the head who claim to be God. We can safely ignore them. Jesus didn't just make the claim, though. He backed up the claim by coming back to life, so we don't dare ignore Him. Second, though, Jesus' resurrection is a source of hope for all of us. It is nearly certain that if this earth continues for another 100 years, none of us will be around to see it. We'll all be in our tombs instead. The atheist would say that's the end of us. But friends, it isn't the end of us, and we can know that because Christ was raised from the dead. God promised to raise Jesus, and He did. He promises to raise us too if we are faithful, and so we can be sure that He will.

III. Jesus' Meaning to Us.

- A. Now that we see what Jesus did on earth, we can explore what all of this means to us. Along these lines we first need to recognize that **HIS LIFE IS OUR EXAMPLE**. Peter brings this up in **1 PETER 2:21**. In context, Peter is speaking of following Jesus in suffering for what is right, but the idea is also generally true. There are literally dozens of passages in Scripture that discuss how we should imitate Jesus in every area of our lives. Jesus is the only One who has always done what was right and has always pleased God. If we likewise want to do good and bring joy to our heavenly Father, there's no other way but to follow in Jesus' steps.
- B. In order to carry this out in our lives, there are three things we have to do: study God's word, think about it, and put what we learn into practice. There are lots of people out there who claim to be followers of Jesus, but whose lives look nothing like His, and very often, their problem is that they have no idea how Jesus actually lived, so they have no standard for comparison. God's word, though, tells us everything we need to know about Him, and study of and meditation on that word makes that crucial information our own. Once we know what we're supposed to do, we need to have the courage and determination to do it. Only then can we claim to be disciples of Jesus.
- C. For the times when we don't follow Jesus, though, it's just as important to grasp that **HIS DEATH IS OUR SACRIFICE**. As we've mentioned before, sin is a violation of God's law, and when we sin, we earn death for ourselves. Look at what **ROMANS 5:8-9** reveals about this. This is the whole point of Jesus coming to earth and dying in the first place. He died when He was innocent, so God can count the shedding of His innocent blood as the price for our sin. Once that happens, we're no longer under a spiritual death sentence because the debt that we owe has already been paid. Sin is still a deadly serious business, friends, but because of the incomprehensible love of Jesus who died for us, it is no longer our deaths. It's a terrible, tragic injustice that Jesus died, but the result of it for us is that we can live free from sin and free from fear of the wrath of God.

Conclusion. If you would like the blood of Jesus to cleanse you from your sins, call on Him today.