

BACK TO BASICS



“Who is Jesus?”

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“Who do you say that I am?”

“Who do men say that I am?” Our Lord Jesus Christ asked this question of His disciples as they journeyed to the region of Caesarea Philippi (Matt. 16:13). Today, we hear many answers: “Jesus was a great moral teacher.” Others respond, “He was a wise philosopher.” Some answer saying, “He was a prophet.”

Amidst these answers, the Lord still asks us today, “But who do you say that I am?” (Matt. 16:15). For the Christian, the faith about the Lord Jesus Christ is expressed completely and succinctly in the Nicene Creed, “We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Only-Begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages; Light of Light; true God of true God; begotten, not created; of one essence with the Father, by Whom all things were made.”

It is on this confession of faith that the Lord built His Church; He being the foundation and chief cornerstone (Eph. 2:20). Through the words of the Creed, the Church defines who the Lord Jesus Christ is and our relationship to Him.

“Lord”

When we confess Jesus as Lord, we are proclaiming His divinity. The word “Lord” was used throughout the Old Testament, for God Himself. The early church gave this title to the glorified Jesus to express that He is the absolute and undisputed Creator and Possessor of the entire universe; that He is the Master and we are the servants. One of the earliest creeds of the Church was “Jesus is Lord” (Rom. 10:19; 1 Cor. 12:3; Col. 2:6).

“Jesus”

Jesus is the Greek for the Jewish name “Joshua” which means “God is salvation.” The angel of the Lord told Joseph in a dream, “*And you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins*” (Matt. 1:21). The nature of Christ’s mission was announced from before His birth. In calling upon the name “Jesus”, we confess that God became fully man while remaining fully God in one and the same person. In the person of Jesus, God has granted salvation to all who believe in Him.

“Christ”

When death entered into the world through the sin of Adam and Eve, God made a promise that the human race would be saved (Gen. 3:15). God’s people had waited for this promised Messiah. “Christ” is the Greek word for “the anointed one” and is the equivalent of the Hebrew “Messiah”. In saying, “Jesus Christ”, we proclaim that Jesus is the One anointed by God to save His people.

“Only-Begotten Son of God...”

We believe that God is three persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) in one. Jesus as the Son of God is eternally begotten of the Father. The title, “Only-Begotten Son”, is meant to distinguish our Lord Jesus’ sonship to God from ours. He alone is the Son of God; having the same divine nature and essence of God.

The Lord Jesus is called the *Logos*; that is, the Word or the uttering Wisdom of God. Just as words communicate our inner most feelings, Christ, as the Word of the Father, communicates to us the thoughts of God.

“Light of Light”

The Lord Jesus is Light in the theological and not the material sense. “*I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life*” (John 8:12). Christ is “*the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world*” (John 1:9).

The Lord, by His nature, is the unapproachable Light (1 Tim. 6:16), but in becoming man, He gives us the opportunity to come to Him. He casts out the darkness of sin and gives us His light in order to be shining examples in the world (Matt. 5:16).

“True God of True God”

Our Lord Jesus Christ has the true nature of God with all His Divine attributes; He is eternal, the Creator, Almighty, omnipresent, unlimited, all-knowing, and the Forgiver of sins. Many of His divine attributes were revealed in His ministry through His miracles. Christ is truth unveiled, for He revealed the whole truth about Who God is and what man is meant to be.

“Begotten not Created...”

“*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*” (John 1:1). As the Son of God, Jesus was eternally begotten of the Father. In His humanity, Christ is the promised Messiah out of the root of Abraham and David. In His divinity, He existed before time began (John 8:58).

Augustine said that the Lord Jesus was born twice: 1) an everlasting birth before all ages from the Father, but without a mother, and 2) a birth in the fullness of time from a mother without an earthly father. Unlike

other beings, He was not created, since He was begotten before the ages.

Through the Word of God, “*All things were made...and without Him nothing was made that was made*” (John 1:3).

Achieve Your Potential in Christ!

“I am only human.” We so often use this excuse when we make mistakes and fall into sin. We look at our Lord’s divine attributes and lose hope that we could never be perfect as He commanded.

In remembering the rest of the Creed, which states that Christ “was incarnate and became man,” we realize that our Lord Jesus took on our humanity and became like us in every way except sin. He made man a temple of God and a dwelling place for the Holy Spirit. Through His Holy Ascension, he lifted man up with Him to the heavens.

We may be tempted to think that the closer we come to God, the more we must give up our human nature; the more like God we would be, the less human we can be. This is not true. Because we are created in the image and likeness of God, we only deny our humanity when we fall into sin. The farther away from God we travel, the less human we become. To regain the dignity of our human nature is to come back to our Lord Jesus Christ to recover it.

Jesus was fully God and fully man. To be truly human is to be like Christ. Instead of saying, “I am only human” as an excuse to sin, let us say it as we look at the perfect example of what a human can truly be: our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord dwelt among us and taught us how to live. Jesus is the embodiment of love, and out of His love for each one of us, He sacrificed Himself on the cross in order to save us and to give us the

power to become like Him in holiness and righteousness.

Conclusion

Let us summarize what we have learned about the Lord Jesus Christ:

1. In calling Him “Lord”, we confess Jesus as God Himself.
2. The name “Jesus” means “God is salvation.” Christ’s mission was to save us from our sins.
3. In calling Him “Christ”, we express our faith that Jesus, the Son of God, the Second person of the Holy Trinity, is promised Messiah.
4. Jesus is the Begotten Son of God and the *Logos*. He is the uttering Wisdom of God, who communicates to us the thoughts of God.
5. He is the True Light in the theological sense and He gives light to all who believe in Him.
6. He is True God. Christ reveals the whole truth about who God is.
7. The Son of God was eternally begotten, existing from the beginning. Through Him all things were created.
8. To be truly human is to be like our Lord Jesus Christ. He is fully God and fully man.
9. As God is love, Jesus’ love was manifest by His sacrifice on the Cross in order to save us from sin and death.

References:

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2. H.H. Pope Shenouda III. The Creed. Cairo: July 1998.