

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE CHRIST?

Introduction

1. Have you ever met a celebrity, sports person, politician, or some other person of importance? You may have seen them on television, but meeting them in person is something very different, isn't it? It is having met them in person that you were able to evaluate and reach a conclusion about them.
2. What is a person to think of Jesus? We will not have the opportunity to meet Jesus in person, and so we must reach our conclusions about Him based solely upon eyewitness accounts.



We Must Reach Our Conclusions About Jesus Based Solely Upon Eyewitness Accounts

3. In this lesson we will consider (i) The reactions of Jesus' contemporaries toward Him, (ii) The reasons Jesus is rejected by many and accepted by a few, and (iii) How people use Jesus for their own selfish purposes.

1. The Reactions Of Jesus' Contemporaries Toward Him.

a. The reaction of a stranger and those familiar with Him:

- 1) Jesus was a stranger to Nathanael, and yet after speaking with Him for a few minutes, he declared Jesus to be the Son of God and the King of Israel.

“The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, Follow Me. Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote - Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said to him, Can anything good come out of Nazareth? Philip said to him, Come and see. Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit! Nathanael said to Him, How do You know me? Jesus answered and said to him, Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you. Nathanael answered and said to Him, Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” (John 1:43-49).

- 2) Jesus, of course was no stranger to the citizens of Nazareth because this is the city in which He was raised. It was their familiarity with Jesus that bred their contempt and their murderous wrath.

“Jesus came to Nazareth and went into the synagogue, and He was handed the book of Isaiah and read where it was written: ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.’ Jesus said to them, ‘Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.’ While they marveled at His gracious words, they asked, ‘Is this not Joseph's son?’ Jesus said, ‘You will surely say this proverb to Me, ‘Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Your country.’ Then He said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country. Indeed, many widows were in Israel during the famine in the days of Elijah, but he was only sent to the widow Zarephath in the region of Sidon. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian. So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff. Then passing through the midst of them, He went His way” (Luke 4:16-30).

b. Various reactions toward Jesus:

1) Some worshiped Him (**Matthew 14:22-33**), but others asked Him to leave them (**Luke 8:37**).

2) Some thought He was good, others said He was a deceiver:

“And there was much complaining among the people concerning Him. Some said, He is good; others said, No, on the contrary, He deceives the people” (**John 7:12**).

3) Others criticized His education (**Luke 4:22**), His hometown (**John 1:46**), and His popularity (**John 7:12**). They tried to entrap Him with difficult questions (**Matthew 22:15; Mark 12:13; Luke 11:53-54; 20:20**). As well as all this, they attributed His miracles to the Devil (**Mark 3:22**).

c. People may react to Jesus in various ways, but He Himself left no neutral ground; we will either believe in Him unto salvation or disbelieve unto our peril.

“He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him” (**John 3:36**).

“Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins” (**John 8:24**).

2. The Reasons Jesus Is Rejected By Many And Accepted By A Few.

a. Jesus challenges people’s desires. Jesus does not leave us free to follow our own desires and live selfish lives.

1) Jesus reaches into our hearts and challenges our innermost desires:

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder [Exodus 2:13], and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire” (**Matthew 5:21-22**).

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery [Exodus 20:14].' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (**Matthew 5:27-28**).

Many reject Jesus’ call to follow Him because He demands a change of heart and a transformed life.

It is our desires that determine our behavior:

“But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man” (**Matthew 15:18-20**).

2) Some, however, recognize that unbridled desires and undisciplined lives lead to disaster (**Romans 6:20-21; Ephesians 2:1-3**), and look to the strength and encouragement of Jesus to take control of their lives (**Philippians 4:13; Ephesians 4:20-24**). In so doing they find happiness, substance and true self-esteem.

b. Jesus challenges people’s wills. He does this by claiming to have the full authority of heaven and thus the right to command (**Matthew 28:18-20**).

1) The standard of acceptance before God is obedience to Christ:

“And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him” (**Hebrews 5:9**).

“But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?” (**Luke 6:46**).

- 2) Many people are too stubborn, hard-headed and self-willed to take orders from anyone - even God Himself!
 - a) Those who resist authority will suffer the disfavor of authority (teacher, law, parents, boss, etc.).

“For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience” (Ephesians 5:5-6).

“But to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness - indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek” (Romans 2:8-9).
 - b) However the day is coming when all will acknowledge Jesus as Lord:

“Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 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, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:9-11).
 - 3) Some, however, acknowledge the divine nature of Jesus and His right to order our lives as He sees fit. But more importantly, they understand that His law and will is always for our good.
- c. Jesus challenges people’s priorities. Jesus forces us to think about each aspect of life (Matthew 6:25-34), each word we speak (Matthew 12:36), each day we live (Colossians 4:5), each obligation placed upon us (Romans 13:8), each person we meet (Galatians 6:10) - and where we are headed eternally (Matthew 16:26).
 - 1) Jesus instructs us to make the kingdom of God our first priority (Matthew 6:33), lay up treasures in heaven (Matthew 6:20), make peace with our enemies (Matthew 5:23-24), and honor our mates (Matthew 5:31-32). These things directly challenge “conventional wisdom” and Western values.
 - 2) Our society is suffering from misplaced priorities: sex is more important than marriage, recreation is more important than responsibility, and power is more important than service.

3. How People Use Jesus For Their Own Selfish Purposes.

- a. Perhaps the greatest and most subtle danger comes from those who wish to use Jesus for their own purposes: some wanted a bread-supplier (John 6:26), others wanted a rallying point for insurrection (John 6:14-15), still others simply wanted to be amused by a miracle (Luke 23:8).
- b. Today, some “use” Jesus for humanitarian purposes only: some stress His love at the expense of justice and punishment, and others use Him as a pretext for entertainment.
- c. The danger is that these people never critically analyze their relationship with Him and see their errors.

Conclusion

“What do YOU think about the Christ?” (Matthew 22:42). True belief in God must result in full acceptance of Jesus:

“Jesus said to them, If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me” (John 8:42).

“Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him” (1 John 5:1).

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This lesson is a reworking of a lesson by the same title by Jim Jonas
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