

Who is Jesus Christ?

During this weekend you have heard us talk many times about Jesus Christ and our relationship with Him. However, many people do not know who he really is, so this morning I want to talk to you about Him.

Who is Jesus? Because He lived about 2,000 years ago, many people think of Him as just a character in a fictional story. Not so! Jesus was a true person who lived in history.

You may have heard about Socrates and Plato. They were Greek philosophers who lived 400 years before Jesus, and writings about them and by them exist and are studied in academic circles today. Some have heard about Julius and Augustus Caesar who were early rulers of Rome. The months, July and August, were named after them by their governments. Augustus Caesar was born 63 years before Christ, and he was emperor when Christ was born.

History books tell us that Jesus definitely is as real a person as the Caesars were. Even people who don't believe that Jesus is the son of God do acknowledge that He lived, although some claim that He was only a prophet. History proves the existence of Jesus and we know that He was a living man, born of Mary and like us in all things except sin, because He was sent by God.

But Jesus is different from every other historical figure. He still lives, so we can know Him today, personally.

WHY DID JESUS COME?

First let's look at why God created us. God's decided to create living beings that He could love and have as friends. He could have made us with behavior like His angels, but God wanted more, I guess. He wanted us to love Him freely, not like a slave or a puppet. So He gave us a free will – free choice. We could love God or fail to respect our Creator and the source of all love. And right from the beginning we started making some wrong choices. So God sent Moses and the Ten Commandments as rules to guide our lives and

He sent prophets to guide us, but we didn't listen to any of them for very long. That is the story of the Old Testament of the bible.

Then God continued His plan of restoration and redemption and was drawing us closer into a loving relationship with Himself. And since we didn't listen to Moses or the prophets, He decided to come Himself. He came to us in a form that we could understand, so He came as a man. He sent Jesus filled with His own spirit to that He, God, could be with us. And, through Jesus, God reminded us of His love and forgiveness. When asked which commandments were the most important, Jesus said, "Love God," and then he said, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Before He left this earth, Jesus said to His disciples "Love one another as I have loved you. By your love for each other they will know that you are my disciples," love – that's what we and Jesus are all about.

SO, FIRST, JESUS IS A MAN

Jesus is as fully human as any human being. He is like us in all things except he never sinned.

He became disappointed. In John 14:9 Jesus replied, "Philip, don't you even yet know who I am, even after all the time I have been with you? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father! So why are you asking to see him?"

NLT.

He had poured out on this intimate group of 12 and still they didn't recognize him and his response to Peter shows his disappointment. Just like the times when we are not understood. This can help us realize that Jesus totally understands and can empathize with us.

Mark 14:32 we see him suffering

32 And they came to an olive grove called Gethsemane, and Jesus said, "Sit here while I go and pray." 33 He took Peter, James, and John with him, and he began to be filled with horror and deep distress. 34 He told them, "My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death. Stay here and watch with me." 35 He went on a little farther and fell face down on the ground. He prayed that, if it were possible, the awful hour awaiting him might pass him by. 36 "Abba, Father," he

said, "everything is possible for you. Please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will, not mine." NLT

He knew what was coming, he knew the cross lay right around the corner and He was struggling, suffering, even to his pours bleeding because of the stress,

Jesus definitely is a man with feelings just like us.

Jesus was also called "Christ" from the Greek word "Christos," which means the same as the Jewish word "Messiah." Messiah and Christ also mean Redeemer, liberator, Deliverer, "Anointed one". In those days kings were anointed with oil, but Jesus was also anointed with the Holy Spirit of God.

THEN CAME JESUS' DEATH AND RESURRECTION

He was crucified, died, and came back to life. He was resurrected. Some people think that His resurrection was a fake, that someone took His body out of the tomb.

But the Romans wouldn't have done that. They were the people who killed Him and they were guarding the tomb.

That leaves the apostles who remained in hiding in terror and fright after Jesus died. They were too afraid to do anything. When they saw Jesus among them again they rejoiced and started spreading the good news. Jesus gave them new strength. According to history, 11 of the disciples were tortured and killed for their work.

If Jesus' resurrection was just a phony plot by the apostles, certainly some of them would have confessed to avoid death. Can you imagine 11 people accepting whippings, beatings, crucifixion and wrongful death when they could have gone free by admitting the scam if there was one?

AND THEN THERE WAS A JEW NAMED SAUL

Saul was a dedicated Pharisee who delighted in hunting down and persecuting the followers of Jesus whom he hated. He was on the

road to Damascus to find some of them and bring them back to Jerusalem to be killed. On the way, Jesus appeared to him and asked, "Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?" Saul was struck blind by Jesus' light, only to be healed by Jesus' empowering of Ananias, one of the Christians Saul was hunting.

Saul saw Jesus, was converted, and became a dedicated apostle. His name was changed to Paul and he started to spread the word of Jesus to Jews and gentiles in many countries. His letters to the community churches and believers that followed Jesus in Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi and many others became major books of the New Testament.

In his 2nd letter to the Corinthians, Paul wrote, "Five times I was given 39 lashes by the Jews. Three times I was whipped by the Romans and once I was stoned. I have been in 3 shipwrecks and once was 24 hours in the water. I have been in danger from fellow Jews and from gentiles."

Paul also was in prison at least three times, suffered a serious physical ailment, and died a martyr. For twenty-five years he endured agony to spread the word of Jesus. He was extremely intelligent, and if there had been anything false about Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, Paul, more than anyone, would have known.

There can be no doubt, Jesus' death and resurrection is true!! Jesus invites us to friendship and a deep relationship with Him today.

Please close your eyes for a moment and reflect silently on what you've just heard. We will let you know when you may begin your discussion.