

I believe in Jesus

We're continuing with our series based on the creed which has been a central part of our church life and worship for centuries. But, because of that, it can easily become a piece of mindless repetition. So we are looking at the phrases that make up the creed to check that we know what we do believe. 'I believe in Jesus' is probably a statement we would support – but the hard question is 'Which Jesus?' Is it the sweet baby of Bethlehem or the man who cared for struggling people? Is that big enough to define a Biblical Jesus?

Imagine you met someone who said they had never heard of Jesus and knew nothing about him. How would you describe Jesus to such a person?

The Bible starts the narrative of his earthly life with his birth. **Read Matthew 1:18 to 25**. The writers of the Apostles Creed were keen to establish the fact of the virgin birth. Mary had not been part of a normal sexual union – the conception of Jesus was accomplished by the action of the Holy Spirit. It was the only way that Jesus could be created to be fully God and fully man.

What objections have you heard to the idea of immaculate conception and virgin Birth?

Do you struggle with it yourself in a 21st century 'advanced medicine' culture?

Nobody would seriously doubt the existence of Jesus. There is too much evidence. No Jew or Muslim would question his existence. Their questions would be about his identity. Who was he? There are so many places to turn to. Let's start with **Colossians 1 :15 to 23**. Read the passage through together.

Try to put each phrase into words that a 'not-yet believer' would understand

- Image of the invisible God
- Firstborn over all creation
- By him all things were created
- He is before all things
- In him all things hold together
- He is the head of the body, the church
- He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead

Which were the hardest to explain?

It's pretty clear that Bethlehem was not his first appearance. The Bible states that Jesus was there 'before all things'. He co-existed with God the beginning. The whole character of God was present in his son. The last phrase of the passage in Colossians says that.

'For God was pleased to have his fullness dwell in him' (1:19)

His claim was that he was Son of God – that's why the Jews accused him of blasphemy (Deut 6:4). That verse claimed that God 'was one'. The Father existed so Jesus was the second manifestation of God. That was why in John 10:22 the Jews picked up stones to kill him. Subsequently this was the ammunition the Jews needed to get Jesus crucified.

John's summary at the end of John 20 reveals that John thought so

'These things are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Son of God' (John 20:31)

When faced with that key question at his trial – ‘are you the son of God’ Jesus replied ‘you say that I am’. That is certainly not a denial. But if you read John 5:16 to 30 you can see the claim that Jesus was God’s son. Read the passage.

This is a significant claim – it is unique in world religions. Many religions have their great leaders or prophets. But Jesus claims to be ‘God in a body’

What difference should this unique fact make to our relationship with God?

How does it change the way we speak about Jesus to our friends?

It is interesting to see what Jesus was capable of doing. One of the places to see that is in the first eight chapters of Mark. This gospel establishes that Jesus Has power over every aspect of the world he created

1:21	He deals with an evil spirit	5:1	Demon possession
1:29	Many are healed	5:21	Raising the dead
1:40	Healing again	6:30	Feeds the 5000
2:1	Healing and forgiving sins	6:45	Walks on the water
2:23	Lord of the Sabbath	8:1	Feeds 4000
4:35	Calms the storm		

Read the verses around the group.

It is perhaps, not surprising, that Jesus had power over several aspects of the world he created.

How should this affect our relationship with Jesus? Do we underestimate his power?

Do we sometimes forget that the gentle Jesus that we often speak about had power over the whole natural world?

Some more verses which are specifically Jesus’ personal claims of deity.

In the temple at 12 years old Jesus said ‘he must be about his father’s business’ Luke 2:49

At his baptism in Jordan, God’s voice was heard – ‘this is my son whom I love – with him I am well pleased’. Matthew 3:17

Jesus said ‘I am the bread that came down from heaven’ (John 6:41 & 51)

‘I am from above’ (John 8:23)

But remember he experienced both human weakness and felt human emotions. You may like to spend some time looking at these verses

Luke 2:52	He developed as a person	John 11:35	Wept at the grave of Lazarus
John 4:6	He got tired	Mark 3:5	He could be angry
John 19:28	Ho got thirsty	Mark 11:11	
Matthew 4:11	Fasting in the desert made him weak	Heb 5:7	He prayed with deep emotion
John 12:27	His heart was troubled	Luke 22:44	The drops of blood of his agony
John 13:21		Heb 4:15	Tempted in every way as we are
Matt 8:10	Astonished at the faith of the centurion		

Spend some time thanking God for the wonderful gift of Jesus our saviour and Lord

If anyone would like a fuller version of verses to do with the identity of Jesus, please get in touch with the office.