



# Faith for the Hopeful

## Who is this Christ who saves us?

### Who is Christ? - they wondered

Did the early followers in Jerusalem understand Christ to be a God-man as described much later by the Church catholic? If you assume that they did, some of the New Testament will be a mystery to you.

You must understand the meanings of the words in the NT just as the writers understood them, if the truth is to be revealed to you.

People in those days thought of Christ as a prophet

Mark 8:27-30 "And Christ went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Caesarea Philippi: and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am? And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets."

"And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ [Messiah - anointed human]. And he charged them that they should tell no man of him."

*In the synoptics he was called by the name "master" or "good master", or "Lord" (an honorary title, not related to the Lord God Almighty).*

So Christ forbade his disciples to reveal to any man that He was the Messiah.

There is no statement anywhere that the disciples knew He was God. Perhaps Peter understood something more from his revelation, but he kept it quiet.

When you read that Christ says "thy faith hath saved thee" you may think that it was the man's belief in Christ that healed him. That somehow he instinctively knew that "Christ was the Son of God, and also God" (as Anglicans do profess in their Liturgy).

But the writer of this gospel did not know this truth. He understood the healing to be a direct gift from God. Christ was the "High Priest" who caused this "child of God" to recognize God's intervention in his life.

You must understand that the multitudes - the poor,

### The Beatitudes

*Matthew 5:3-12 "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.*

*Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.*

*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.*

*Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.*

*Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.*

*Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.*

*Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."*



“the lost sheep of Israel” - thought God had deserted them. Christ’s showed them through healings that God had not forgotten them, nor deserted them. Christ told His disciples to pray to those healed:

Luke 10:9 “...The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.”

Luke 8:1 “... he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him,”

People, having gladly accepted the good news of the Kingdom of God, were able to receive God’s grace and were healed. God healed everyone who believed that He was present (“the gospel of the kingdom of God”). Christ’s human touch was “the hand of God”, passing on God’s grace.

In Christ’s home village, the good news was not believed by all, so God’s grace was often not received, and Christ could not heal them (Mk 6:4-6). Christ apologized to His disciples “I can of mine own self do nothing.”

It was not a lack of individual’s faith in Christ that prevented the cure, for people thought of Him as only as a prophet/healer. The failure to heal was caused by people’s belief that they were sick because of God’s absence.

Christ came to make the poor understand that they had not been forgotten, that God was truly present among them. But they had only lost the faith that God had given them. They were like lost sheep.

He told them, as they were being healed, that God had already forgiven them, but because they did not believe that He had forgiven them, they remained sick, maimed, halt, or blind. Perhaps he said to them, “Now go and believe that God still loves you”.

Similarly, in our Anglican Catholic liturgy, when the priest stands in for Christ, he lays his hands on you for a blessing, it is God who is offering His grace, not the Priest, who merely helps you to receive.

Christ was demonstrating to the crowds that the invisible God was here among them. “You are witnessing the glory of God. I am only a virtuous man, and through my hands, God is accomplishing this work.”

Matthew 9:8 “But when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.”

## REFERENCES

### This Way

Paul referred to the Jewish sect of Christ’s disciples as “this way” which he persecuted c. 40.

“This Way” was a group of Hebrews including The Twelve Apostles, who followed the direction of James, the “brother of Christ”.

The term “catholic” was first used by Bp. Ignatius of Antioch in a letter to the Smyrneans at the beginning of the 2nd. cent (Joseph Ratzinger *On the Way to Christ*).

Lu 18:42\* And Christ said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee.

Eph 2:8\* For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

Hebrews 3:1 “Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Christ;”

Matthew 15:24 “But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

Luke 17:21 “Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.”

John 5:19 “Then answered Christ and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.”

John 5:30 “I can of mine own self do nothing :..., but the will of the Father which hath sent me.”

Mark 6:4-6 “But Christ said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house. And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he



## What the Bishops said about Christ AD 325

We all know that in AD 325 300 of the Bishops of the Church met in the City of Nicaea (near Constantinople) to argue and finally agree that Christ is God. The definition was summarized in a 226 word document called the Nicene Creed.

*I BELIEVE in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, And of all things visible and invisible: And in one Lord Christ Christ, the only-begotten Son of God; Begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God: Begotten, not made; Being of one substance with the Father; By whom all things were made: Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, And was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, And was made man: And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried: And the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures: And ascended into heaven, And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father: And he shall come again, with glory, to judge both the quick and the dead; Whose kingdom shall have no end.*  
*And I believe in the Holy Ghost, The Lord, and Giver of Life, Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son; Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; Who spoke by the Prophets: And I believe one Catholic and Apostolic Church: I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins: And I look for the Resurrection of the dead: And the Life of the world to come. Amen.*

Until this statement was made, the Bishops of the Church - who were not under any central authority and were authorities in their own Diocese, taught differing ideas about Christ (Iranaeus - see side panel). Some taught that He was the Messiah - a man anointed to be King of Judea, and a descendant of King David.

Some taught that He was a prophet who was commissioned by God at His baptism to save Israel. Some that he was a prophet like Elias.

Others like Thomas, taught that he was a divine being without any physical body.

Some taught that he was God Yahweh come down to earth temporarily abandoning heaven. Others, like Mar-

went round about the villages, teaching.”

Being separated from God is considered by some to be the meaning of “outer darkness”

It was believed by the Hebrews that sin was the cause of sickness, and deformity.

Chrysostom said of Mt 9:8

“They did not come close to recognizing who He was. For again they were saying ‘This man is not from God!’”

### God’s power is made known by his disciples

John 1:12 “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:”

Romans 13:1 “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.”

### Bp. Clement receives the knowledge of Christ’s natures

Bp. Clement of Rome was the first authority to state that Christ was God, c. 150. But he did not have authority to mandate this belief amongst the other Bishops. It was not believed by the entire Church until the Council of Nicea in AD 325.

### Bp. Iranaeus identifies errors.

Iranaeus, Polycarp’s student, was the first Bishop (Lyons, France b130-d202) to detail the Christian Faith in writing in his 5 volume work - “Against the so-called false knowledge ..” c. 180. It was written for a friend, a Bishop, so that he would be wary of the teachings of errant Bishops (more than sixty sects were identified by Iranaeus).

### Christology Timetable

Here is the timetable which explains the gradual revelation by the Holy Spirit of the nature of Christ.



cion and the Paulinists, that He was the Son of a God above all Gods even Yahweh.

Herod thought him to be John the Baptist reincarnated.

During these years of confusion the Gospels and Epistles were written, so it is no wonder that the New Testament writings are unclear as to the exact nature of Christ.

We, who think we know the truth, read the gospels and epistles as if everyone at that time also knew about the God-man. And so we misunderstand the New Testament writings. We read the text as if the writers, the Apostles, and the audience knew He was God. We are bewildered by the ignorance of the "Jews." We ask: why would they crucify someone they knew to be God?

Or we wonder how God could have "died" on the cross with Christ?, Some said God was not on the cross.

We don't understand Judas's behavior, or that of John. When John heard from Christ that Judas was the traitor why didn't he try to stop Judas, or warn the others?

Some think that, after the resurrection, all the apostles knew Christ was God. But why did they then not tell their disciples this truth? During the first hundred years of the Church, none of the Bishops said He was God.

God revealed the truth that Christ was God to very few people during those first two hundred years of the Church (His Mother, Nathanael, Peter, the man born blind, Thomas, John, Marcion, Bp. Clement, and Bp. Justin Martyr).

Paul said he had learned the truth about Christ directly from the risen Christ, but that he was forbidden to reveal what he knew to the Hebrews.

Here is how "Luke", at the beginning of the 2nd. cent., describes Christ. He quotes Peter who argues that Christ, now "slain", was the Messiah, a descendant of King David, destined to sit on David's throne, and therefore the real King of the Jews (Herod was the acting King of the Jews).

#### **Acts 2:22 The day of Pentecost**

"Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Christ of Nazareth, a **man** approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which **God did by him** in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, **ye have taken, and by wicked hands**

AD 33 Only Peter, by God the Father via the Holy Spirit, knows Christ is divine but does not publicly state this for fear of God's command.

c. 48 - Paul at Damascus knows that Christ is Divine from his vision of the risen Christ, and from his vision of the third heaven.

55 - 65 Paul hints that Christ is God in his teachings to non-Jewish disciples.

c. 75-100 Gospels Mark, Matthew.

c. 105 John's Gospel - Christ is God the Word incarnate.

c. 105 Bishop Ignatius "I pray for your happiness forever in **our God Christ Christ.**" But apparently not all the Bishops agreed that Christ was God.

125 Aristides "The Christians trace the beginning of their religion to Christ the Messiah. he is called the Son of the Most High God. It is said that God came down from heaven. He assumed flesh and clothed Himself with it from a Hebrew virgin. **And the Son of God lived in a daughter of man.**

c. 125 Marcion introduces ten Paulinist epistles, and a gospel by "Paul" and preaches that Paul taught there are two Gods, and Christ is God the Father's Son.

c. 135 The Bishops responds to Marcion's gospel with: Acts, Galatians, II Co., II Th., Pastoral Epistles, and a revised Gospel of "Luke" which confirm only one God, but imply that Christ may also be divine.

**150 Bp. Clement "Brethren, it is fitting that you should think of Christ Christ as of God - as the judge of the living and the dead."**

160 Bp. Justin Martyr "We reasonably worship Him, having learned that He is the Son of the true God Himself, and holding Him in the second place. ... Next to God we worship and love the Word who is from the unbegotten and ineffable God."



**have crucified and slain:** Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance. Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the **fruit of his loins, according to the flesh**, he would raise up **Christ to sit on his throne**; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Christ hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my **Lord, Sit thou on my right hand**, Until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that **God hath made that same Christ, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.**” Acts 2:22-36, KJV.

Here is J.B. Philips translation which might help with your understanding (he was an Anglican priest c 1940).

““Men of Israel, I beg you to listen to my words. Christ of Nazareth **was a man** proved to you by God himself through the works of power, the miracles and the signs which **God showed through him** here amongst you--as you very well know. This **man**, who was put into your power by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, **you nailed up and murdered, and you used for your purpose men without the Law!** But God would not allow the bitter pains of death to hold him. He raised him to life again--and indeed there was nothing by which death could hold such a **man**. When David speaks about him he says,

### Paul's vision about Christ

2 Corinthians 12:1-4 ( written by a disciple of Paul most probably)

“It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.”

Galatians 1:1 “Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Christ Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;)”

Galatians 1:11, 12 “But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Christ Christ.”

### Commentary on the text

Peter is saying: “In other words through your behavior you have killed your own King, the lawful descendent of King David, who has been anointed by God.

According to this passage, Christ was a man, whom God used to perform His miracles.” He was divinely anointed as was David. Christ was resurrected by God, while David still lies buried. Christ was therefore superior to David.

But Peter stopped far short of saying that Christ is God.

Although the Ecumenical councils since the beginning of the 4th. cent., has stated that Christ is God, this truth was hidden from the twelve and from the next two generations of disciples - though Peter probably understood. Possibly Thomas and Judas also understood. Judas died when Christ did.

After the resurrected Christ appeared to the twelve, Thomas was



I beheld the Lord always before my face; For he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: Therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; Moreover my flesh also shall dwell in hope: Because thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades, Neither wilt thou give thy holy one to see corruption. Thou madest known unto me the ways of life; Thou shalt make me full of gladness with thy countenance.

“Men and brother-Jews, I can surely speak freely to you about the patriarch David. There is no doubt that he died and was buried, and his grave is here among us to this day. But while he was alive he was a prophet. **He knew that God had given him a most solemn promise that he would place one of his descendants upon his throne.** He foresaw the resurrection of Christ, and it is this of which he is speaking.

Christ did not ‘leave his soul in Hades’ and his body ‘did not see corruption’. This **man Christ** God raised up--a fact of which all of us are eye-witnesses! He has been raised to the right hand of God; he has received from the Father and poured out upon us the promised Holy Spirit--that is what you now see and hear!

David never ascended to Heaven, but he certainly said, The Lord said unto my **Lord, Sit thou on my right hand**, Till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet. “Now therefore the whole nation of Israel must know beyond the shadow of a doubt that this **Christ, whom you crucified, God has declared to be both Lord and Christ.**” Acts 2:22-36, Phil.

“Lord and Christ” means King and Messiah. Now the Pharisees taught that every man would be resurrected, but only as spirit. See how the human nature of Christ is emphasized, because Peter wanted them to know that He was the Messiah, a descendant of King David, whom God was to place on the throne. And that the Pharisees had misunderstood resurrection, for here was proof that the body is resurrected together with the soul.

When you read scripture remember this: That the Church wanted Christ to be a mystery to the Jews. The Church wanted to keep hidden the idea that Christ was The only begotten Son, begotten before all worlds, that He was the “Logos” or God the Word, who was responsible for creating everything that was made. So, in the text of the New Testament Christ called Himself “son of man” signifying to us his birth through a woman.

no longer mentioned in the gospels nor in acts. We know that Thomas abandoned the Holy Land for Asia. Possibly he was asked to leave because of his beliefs which were considered heretical in Jerusalem. He travelled East, founded many churches which taught a Thomasian gospel. Thomas died and is buried in Madras, India.

The gospel of Thomas was read even by Western Bishops. It contains many sayings of Christ that were not recorded in the canonical gospels.

“The Gospel of John” c. 105. includes a condemnation of the particular Thomasian teaching that the Son was not also human.

Looking back we see that the disciples in the Holy Land c. 40 - 66 were not able to receive the truth of the divine nature of Christ, and so the sect began with a misunderstanding of who Christ really was. These disciples taught their own priests and overseers that Christ was the human Messiah prophesied in Judaism.

Christ had with-held the truth, that He was God, from the Twelve, because of the effect that this revelation would have on His brethren. He said He would not try to repair their old cloth in case His repair damaged it. That He would not put His new wine into their old skins in case He damaged the skins. He wanted to fill the holes in their understanding but not at the risk of undermining Judaism. Christ did not tell His disciples He was God.

Luke 24:27 “And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.” But He never said He was God.

In the end He left His brethren with a limited understanding, but with the promise that they would one day be fulfilled (cf. Ro 11,12).

In the synoptic gospels, which were written before “John”, (perhaps AD 80 - 100), there was no statement about Christ being God, for it was not revealed to the writers.



Whatever others thought of the title “Son of God”, a phrase that appears only a few times in the New Testament, Christ was not thought to be a divine personage, and definitely not God. Nothing would have been further from the mind of the Hebrew, than that there might be another God besides Yahweh. Even to suggest such an idea was a blasphemy punishable by stoning to death. Yet at that time the title “son of God” caused no offense. It was only after John revealed that Christ was God the Word that the Jews cried “blasphemy.”

As John and Paul said (sidebar), we are called to become sons of God. And so:

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” Matthew 28:19, 20

I am merely a teacher, another son of God by grace - yet through my hands, God is accomplishing His work.

You also have been called to become a son of God, so do it.

*Waeshael Feb 2009, Charleston SC.*

God chose Paul to reveal the truth to the world but not to the “Jews”. Then John notified the Jews, and they were outraged, The Johannine community was expelled from the synagogues. The Judaizers refused to accept the “good news” that Christ was God. By the 5th cent. there were hardly any Jews left in the “Christian” Church

### **Sons of God**

“Many of us are sons of God, but not such as this Son. He is the true and proper Son by origin, not by adoption; in truth, not by name; by birth, not by creation.

*St. Hilary On the Trinity.*

“ ... we on our part are sons, not by nature, but by grace. [whereas Christ is Son by nature and by grace.]

*St. Augustine On the Gospel of St. John.*

Joh 1:12\* But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

Ro 8:14\* For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

Php 2:15\* That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;

1Jo 3:1\* Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: ...

1Jo 3:2\* Beloved, now are we the sons of God, ...

For further reading about Paul and the Judaizers:

Waeshael's commentary on Galatians - use Google search and enter Hwylcom.org Galatians