

HOW WAS JESUS DIFFERENT?

In Acts 4:12 Peter declared, “*Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*” As students of the Bible we understand that Jesus is the ONLY way to heaven. He said so Himself in John 14:6. When we see such statements, it becomes clear that Jesus was different. But how was he different?

When Jesus asked Peter, “*Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?*” (Matthew 16:13ff), he noted numerous different responses – John the Baptist (raised from the dead), Elijah, one of the other prophets, etc. Clearly, they saw something different in Jesus, but notice how their conclusions, while noble, were not accurate. Peter, on the other hand, having been with Jesus saw Him more accurately. Vs. 16 notes, *Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”* But what was it about Jesus that was different that would prompt Peter and other disciples to reach this conclusion?

In our lesson tonight, I want to address some things that show how Jesus was different.

This lesson is based upon an article in a workbook about evangelism (reaching the lost)¹. It was written in response to skepticism about Jesus. It is no secret that we are living in an age of increasing skepticism, including numerous challenges as to who Jesus really was. Some outright reject His existence, but most scholars of ancient history acknowledge His existence, even if they do not believe in Him. Some see Him as a misunderstood philosopher, an activist, a good Pharisee, or a deceiver. All such suppositions stem from those who refuse to see Him as the gospels portray Him.

BUT, if we were to examine the gospel accounts of His life humbly and unbiased (acknowledging it as a historical document whose writers demonstrated integrity and a desire to record the facts), we can see how Jesus was different and WHY we ought to believe in Him. So let us consider 7 ways that Jesus was different.

I. He thought differently

- a. He lived His life within Jewish communities and was raised as a faithful Jew. At age 12, we find him in Jerusalem at the temple (Luke 2:41-52) where He astounded the Jewish leaders.
- b. He taught the law accurately, AS it was intended – cf. The Sermon on the Mount, distinguishing between manmade traditions and what the law actually taught.
- c. He looked upon people who had been rejected by Jewish leaders and saw souls in need. Consider the Samaritan woman of John 4. Jesus acknowledged and spoke with her, willing to teach her.
- d. He was often misunderstood by His apostles –
 - i. E.g., Matthew 16:6ff Jesus taught to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees. They thought in physical terms while Jesus was trying to get them to think deeper – in spiritual terms.
 - ii. Matthew 18:1-5 – as the apostles argued about greatness, Jesus would take a little child and challenge them to live like a child free from malice and with humility & innocence.
- e. Matthew 20:27 – He taught seemingly contradictory things, but when you thought about it, they were profound. E.g. whoever desires to be first, let him be your slave. He taught with opposites. He reasoned how the poor would be the rich, the weak would be the strong, the meek would inherit the earth, etc.

II. He taught differently

- a. In addition to the above illustrations which involved teaching, consider...
- b. The sermon on the mount – as it was concluded – Matthew 7:28-29 – He taught as one having authority.
- c. John 7:46 – on an occasion when the Sanhedrin sent the temple guard to take Jesus from the temple and bring Him to them, they returned without Him saying, “No man ever spoke like this Man.”

¹ Wilson, Mike. Evangelism Toolbox, © 2002 by Mike Wilson. Pp. 50-52.

- d. He knew man's heart, and taught accordingly – John 2:24-25 – before the time He would not commit himself to men (who were likely ready to make Him a king – cf. John 6:15). Mathew 19:21 – he told the rich, young ruler the one thing he lacked. John 1:47 when introduced to Nathaniel, He knew his character and described him as a Israelite in whom there is no deceit.
- e. When His critics were trying to entrap Him, He always had an answer, often very different than what they expected. For example: Matthew 22:17-22 – is it lawful to pay taxes?
- f. He taught with parables helping His disciples understand spiritual concepts with physical illustrations – cf. Matthew 13:10-11.

III. He made powerful claims

- a. He addressed His relationship with God the Father – John 10:30, “I and My Father are one”;
- b. John 8:58 – “Before Abraham was, I AM...”
- c. Matthew 16:16-17 when Peter declared Him as Christ the Son of God, He accepted it.
- d. John 14:6 – He declared He is the only way to the Father.
- e. He forgave sins – Luke 7:47 after a woman comes and washes His feet with her hair and tears at the home of Simon, a Pharisee; Matthew 9:2-6 – He forgave the sins of the paralytic.

IV. He did things no one else did

- a. His entrance into the world was miraculous setting the stage for His life. In fact, there was more advanced notice of His coming than anyone else ever born. Details of His birth, including being born of a virgin, where (Bethlehem), the timing, Gabriel appearing to both Mary and Elizabeth (Luke 1).
- b. He performed miracles – concerning the claims He made as described above, He often proved them with miracles.
 - i. Consider again Matthew 9:2-8.
 - ii. Luke 7:22-23, on an occasion when John the Baptist was in prison, he sent disciples to ask Jesus, “Are you the coming one or do we look for another?” Jesus performed numerous miracles to prove His claims.
 - iii. When challenged AGAIN by the Jewish leaders, He appealed to His works – John 10:25, 37-38. Understand, many who saw His miracles got it! John 10:19-21 – while the corrupt leaders accused Jesus, many knew what His miracles meant! (John 7:31, 11:45, etc.).
 - iv. John 20:31-31 summarizes his miracles.
- c. He accepted worship – Matthew 8:2 – a leper, 9:18 – a ruler whose daughter was sick, 14:33 after He walked on water and calmed the storm, Matthew 28:9, 17 – after He arose. NOTE: In each of THESE examples the reason they worshipped was because of His miracles.
- d. He even predicted His own death and resurrection – Matthew 16:21, 17:23, John 3:14-15, etc.

V. He lived differently

- a. He practiced what He preached – John 8:46 where He challenged them to convict Him of sin. Rather than violating the Law of Moses, He kept it perfectly and as God intended. Whenever He was accused of violating the Sabbath (which is recorded more than any other type of violation), it was their traditions that overstepped the LOM. Consider Matthew 15:1-9.
- b. He lived a sinless life – 1 Peter 2:22, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Hebrews 4:15, etc.
- c. He lived a selfless life – Philippians 2:5-8; Matthew 20:28 – He came to be served. He had very few earthly possessions – Matthew 8:20.

VI. He had an impact like no other

- a. He was loved by many, especially the common man; and despised by others – those who loved darkness (cf. John 1:11, 3:18-20).
- b. John 12:31-32 – Jesus declared, *Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.*
- c. John 3:2 record Nicodemus, *This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.”*

- d. His apostles and disciples who followed Him were convicted of who He was (even though they did not fully understand everything about Him). Consider John 6:68-69 when many left because of His hard sayings. But when Jesus asked His apostles if they wanted to leave also, Peter answered, *“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”*
- e. Furthermore, the gospels record that as Jesus approached His death many of His disciples abandoned Him. Even after His death, they cowered in fear and dismay, in spite of all He taught and told them. Yet, AFTER He arose and ascended, they were fully committed to Him, even to death and suffering.
- f. Finally, there was Paul, an apostle, one born “out of due time” – 1 Corinthians 15:8. The chief persecutor of the church is now His chief advocate. He gave up everything to follow Jesus (Philippians 3:8). He is the ultimate example of how Jesus can totally transform a life, from sinner to saint. 1 Timothy 1:15 – *Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief.*

VII. He made demands unlike any other

- a. He called for total repentance – Luke 13:3, 5; Matthew 4:17.
- b. He called for man to deny himself, take up His cross and follow Him – Luke 14:26-27, 33.
- c. John 14:15 He declared that “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.”
- d. John 13:34-35 – He challenged us to love others even as we love ourselves.
- e. But He also made promises unlike any other – Matthew 11:28-30, Mark 10:29-31 – what we give up in this life will be abundantly provided, both here *“and in the age to come, eternal life.”*

In these qualities, we can see that Jesus was clearly different. And it is my hope that we can see WHY He is worthy of following. What about you? Are you willing to follow Him?