



Session 11

What is so exceptional about Jesus?

Haven't there been other exceptional teachers, philosophers, and prophets?

• Introduction

"Repeatedly, like a great earthquake, Christianity has sent reverberations across the world. ... That human beings have rights; that they are born equal; that they are owed sustenance, and shelter, and refuge from persecution: these were never self-evident truths.—Holland, Tom. *Dominion* (pp. 539-540).

"I invite you to consider that Christianity is not a *natural* development, but something *supernatural*."
—Glen Scrivener, *The Air We Breathe*, p.208

1. What Jesus said about himself...Claimed authority to forgive sins Mark 2:10

- Claimed that "Something greater than the temple is here."—Matthew 12:6
- Claimed to be the Lord of the Sabbath —Mark 2:28
- Claimed to be the judge of the world (John 5) Claimed to be the only way, the only door, the light of the world, the bread of life, the Good Shepherd (think Psalm 23!)
- Claimed to be the Son of Man who would judge the world. —Mat. 26:64; Daniel 7:13-14
- He said that he came not to be served but to serve...by giving His life. —Mark 10:45
- And predicted he would be arrested, tortured, and crucified.—Mat. 16:21; 17:22-23, etc.
- He said the Scriptures and the prophecies were about him.

Luke 4:18-21 (reading Isaiah 61)—"The Spirit of the Lord is on me because He has anointed me...Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

Luke 18:31—"...Everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled."

John 5:46—"If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me."

He spoke with divine authority. John 12:49—"The Father...commanded me to say all that I have spoken." **Matthew 5:21,27,31, 33, 38, 43**—"You've heard...but I tell you..." **Matthew 7:28-29**—"...the crowds were amazed...because he taught as one having authority..."

2. What Jesus said about life and the kingdom of God...

Love your enemies. Pray for those who persecute you. Blessed are the poor, the persecuted, and those who mourn. The kingdom of heaven is for children. Turn the other cheek. Give him your coat too. Whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave.

3. What Jesus didn't say...

- He never said, "Thus says the Lord..."
- He never said that he had faith in God.
- He never called God "Our Father."
(Adapted from *Too Good To Be False*, by Tom Gilson)

4. What Jesus didn't do...

- He never used his supernatural powers for his own benefit.
- He never investigated or deliberated.
- He didn't object when people worshipped Him. (Matthew 14:33; 28:9, 17)
(Adapted from *Too Good To Be False*, by Tom Gilson)

5. What Jesus did...

- He felt and expressed a range of emotions.
- He was patient and unhurried.
- He claimed authority but washed dirty feet.
- He was a friend to high and low, rich and poor, the upstanding, and the sinner.
- And, of course, he healed the sick, cast out demons, fed the multitudes, and raised the dead.

• The best thing Jesus did...He died for our sins and rose from the dead!

John 1:29—"Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

Mark 10:45—"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

John 10:11-18—"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep... I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again."

6. Choose your miracle.

"Ok, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, I have a job for you. I know you've had no training or prior experience, but we need you to write the most influential works in literature. ...Are you up to it? It won't be easy. We need this to be the life and times of the greatest figure in human history—God but also man, sinless but fully alive, pure but with profound depths, the Judge of the world but with bottomless compassion, the fulfilment of all Jewish hopes but with a global appeal, a man in time but a man for all times. We need a Hero with heart-melting kindness yet steely determination. We need him blasting the self-righteous and befriending sinners. We need sublime ethical teaching to fall from his lips—the kind that builds civilisations. We need extraordinary miracles from him—the kind that would have been noticed (and could therefore be contradicted) by the generation to which you're writing. We need a credible narrative arc whereby he remains impeccably righteous but is nonetheless condemned as a blasphemer. And we need it all to stand up to scrutiny: scriptural, theological, geographic, linguistic, literary and historical. It needs to be believable both near and far, now and later, for those who've lived through these times and for all generations to come. Got it? Now get to work!"—Glen Scrivener, in *The Air We Breathe*, p.215

"I've got the choice of believing two impossible things. I can either believe that the world is constituted so that God took on flesh and was crucified and rose three days later or I can believe that human beings invented this unbelievably preposterous story that has stretched into every atom of culture. And it isn't obvious to me that the second hypothesis is any easier to believe than the first. Because the more you investigate the manifestations of the story of Christ the more insanely complicated and far-reaching it becomes."—Jordan B. Peterson, cited by Scrivener, p.207

"There is enough genius in the Jesus story to remake the world. But we need to ask: does the genius lie in the authors, or have the authors basically reported the genius of their Hero, Jesus?"—Scrivener, p.216

Conclusion and Encouragement