

PLANT Lesson 4: The Messiah



Q: If someone were to ask you who Jesus is, how would you describe Him? Jesus Christ is the foretold Messiah of the Old Testament; the Son of God sent to redeem man from their sin. He is fully God and limited Himself to become fully man so that He could identify with us and ultimately die in our place. He was more than a good teacher, more than a prophet, and more than a man; He was God in the flesh! He is the embodiment of love, a servant of all, and loved us to the point of death. He is Savior, Lord, and Master...

Q: A “theophany” is a visible appearance of God. Considering the divine nature of Jesus, we see in scripture the presence of the pre-incarnate Christ in Jewish history. What examples can we find in the Bible that indicate the presence of Jesus before His earthly ministry? John 1 says that the “Word became flesh”, implying that Jesus existed before His birth. Colossians 1:15-17 teaches us that Jesus was involved in creation. The Lord appeared to Abraham in the form of three men in Genesis 18. Jesus said, “Before Abraham was, I am” (Jn. 8:58). Some people would say that Jesus is the angel of the Lord in several places throughout the Old Testament.

Q: With such a detailed description like the one above (see book), why didn’t the Jews believe that Jesus was the Christ? Look at Matthew 13:13-17 for some ideas. All of the pieces were there and it seems obvious to us, but the Jews were spiritually blind to the arrival of the long awaited Messiah. Because of their disobedience, God had rejected them and they lost their prominence in the world and were subjected to Roman rule. They were accustomed a warrior-king kind of leader and expected the Messiah to come with power as these other Judges and kings had done. They did not anticipate that He would show up as a lowly baby in a manger or a mild-mannered rabbi. If we put ourselves in their shoes, we would have probably responded the same.

Q: Why do some people find it hard to believe that Jesus was God? If He was just a man like us, then it’s hard to believe that He was perfect, sinless, and had divine power. Mankind is not like God. Jesus was certainly different; He was both.

Q: Why do you think the people had a hard time believing that Jesus was the promised Messiah? Do you think that you would have believed in Him had you been a Jew at that time? Why or why not? People saw Jesus as an ordinary man who came from a lower class family. He wasn’t that impressive to people and His resumé didn’t show aptitude for the role of Messiah. In some ways this question is similar to the last. You could approach this question from the perspective of the early Church - after Jesus ascended into heaven. To believe in Jesus would mean to change the way your family had worshipped for hundreds of years. And changing what you believe is no small task; it takes the power of the Holy Spirit to transform a person from the inside out.

Q: Do you find it difficult to believe that Jesus was more than just a man? Why is it challenging for many to believe that Jesus was God? Why did God have to become a man? Why would He choose to? Why couldn’t he just forgive everyone and move on? Some of the thinking in Jesus day viewed the body to be sinful and corrupt, so God would never want to become a man. (This was especially true in the Early Church after Jesus’ earthly ministry.). Mankind is sinful, evil, corrupt, and the source of much that is wrong in this world. It’s hard to believe that God would choose to become a part of an evil, human race.

Q: Why is it hard for some to believe that Jesus was human and not just divine? We often associate mankind with sin because of our universal fallen nature, very different from the perfect nature of God. Jesus identified with us as a man, but He was without sin.

Q: Is it harder for you to accept that Jesus was fully man or fully God? How do we reconcile that He was both? Is it harder to believe that Jesus, the man, was God, or that God became a man and took human form? Both can be challenging to grasp. We all have a sinful nature that we are born with and though Jesus was born of Mary (a sinful human like us), He was born of the Holy Spirit - the perfect and divine Spirit of God. If He had a human father, He would have inherited a sinful nature like us and would not be qualified to be the perfect, sinless Lamb to die in our place.

Q: Are you still in awe of all that He's done for you? If we're honest, we typically are very excited when we first encounter God, but over time the stresses of life, discouragement, doubt, or other distractions can rob us of the joy that comes from knowing the great lengths that God has gone to to redeem us from our sin. He never changes, but our hearts and passion can wane. The good news is that we can also experience revival - a renewed joy and excitement about the work of God in our lives. When you are feeling down about your faith, don't isolate or detach; instead dig deep and get connected to people who will encourage you and fill you with truth that will refill your spiritual tank so that you can overflow with thankfulness.

Progress update on the Class Assignment: Write down your life purpose statement. Last week we shared a list of all of our assets and abilities that we might use to grow the kingdom of God. Over this past week we thought about something that is unique and interesting about our lives that might be used to grab someone's attention. Now it's time to connect this theme to our faith. How can you take this platform and use it to draw people to God? How can you draw attention to what God has done for you?

Perhaps you start by looking at the parallels you see between your life and the need that the rest of mankind has for God? For example, if you are a photographer, God can bring your life into focus. For art, God can make a masterpiece out of your life like Michelangelo did with a scrap of marble that later became the infamous "David" statue in Rome. If serving characterizes your life, Jesus was the servant of all. If you are a good leader, there is no higher goal than to lead people into the presence of God. If you are a parent, then you can change the lives of those under your roof by living an example worth following and by training up your children in the way they should go.

For next week, write down a two-sentence statement to identify how the unique and interesting aspect(s) of your life can help others to better understand the love of God.

Review Memory Verse:

Matthew 13:31-32 - *"The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches."*

PRAYER REQUESTS: