

More Than Talk program 5 - WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT JESUS!?

I'm Frank Eiklor and this is More Than Talk.

He came on the scene some 2000 years ago and He won't go away. What did Napoleon mean when he said, "Superficial minds see a resemblance between Christ and the founders of empires, and the gods of other religions. That resemblance does not exist." He said a whole lot more. Who is Jesus Christ? A man? More than a man. What happens when we cut away the fat of mere opinion and arrive at the facts of history? What is so special about Jesus?!

All eyes were on the bold man who appeared out of the Judean desert. John had the stare of an eagle and a voice like thunder. And when he ordered his hearers to repent, strong men may have shivered and the smart ones held their tongues. Most figured they were looking at Him—the promised Messiah who would fulfill some 2000 years of biblical prophecy! Now he was here—or was he?

John ended the speculation. "I'm not the Messiah—the anointed one. Why I'm not even worthy to untie His shoe laces." His task was to make an announcement—simply an introduction. The next day, John pointed at another man walking toward him. "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" And there He stood—the One who would impact the next 2000 years of history more than all of the world's newsmakers put together. Yeshuah Ha Mashicah. Jesus the Messiah.

What came from His mouth left us—the hearers—speechless. "I am the way, the truth and the life." "I am the resurrection and the life." "I am the good shepherd." "I am the bread of life." And the bombshell to those questioning His identity, "Before Abraham was, I am."

But He was more than talk. It was His touch that left people in shock. A leper with stinking, rotting flesh—healed in an instant. A man not merely made blind, but born blind?! Touched by Jesus and the incredible, the impossible—"Now I see". A little dead boy and a broken hearted mama followed by a crowd of mourners—until Jesus stepped up to the casket and raised that child from the dead?! Oh, and the naked man so filled with hell's demons that he scared the pants off strong men who tried to chain him? One minute he was screaming hell's curses and the next he was sitting at Jesus' feet with a new mind and a set of clothes!

But it was more than just His words that spelled Jesus Christ's authority. And it was more than the incredible miracle stuff that followed in His wake. It was that grace, truth—yes, love—that He seemed to be made of. Three years—just three years—

marked His ministry. That was more than enough. That's over a thousand days of seeing God in motion on planet earth. And all the great minds through the centuries—even those who chose to ignore His love and call—would not be bashful in telling the world what is so special about Jesus!

Who has not heard of Napoleon? The bold French general was out to conquer his world. When he met his Waterloo and was exiled to St. Helena island, the former warrior, Napoleon Bonaparte, gave the world his opinion of Jesus. Listen to his words. "I know men; and I tell you that Jesus Christ is not a man. Superficial minds see a resemblance between Christ and the founders of empires, and the gods of other religions. That resemblance does not exist. There is between Christianity and whatever other religions the distance of infinity. We can say to the authors of every other religion, 'You are neither gods nor the agents of the Deity. You are but missionaries of falsehood, molded from the same clay with all the passions and vices inseparable from them. Your temples and your priests proclaim your origin.'"

But Jesus Christ blew Napoleon's mind. Listen again to him. "Everything in Christ astonishes me. His spirit overawes me, and His will confounds me. Between Him and whoever else in the world, there is no possible term of comparison. He is truly a being by Himself. His ideas and sentiments, the truth which He announces, His manner of convincing are not explained either by human organization or by the nature of things...His religion is a revelation from an intelligence which certainly is not that of man...One can absolutely find nowhere, but in Him alone, the imitation or the example of His life...I search in vain in history to find the similar to Jesus Christ, or anything which can approach the gospel. Neither history, nor humanity, nor the ages, nor nature, offer me anything with which I am able to compare it or to explain it. Here everything is extra extraordinary."

Stay with me for another incredible testimony about Jesus. The great historian Arnold Toynbee, in his "Study of History" spent 80 pages covering so-called "saviors of society" who tried to impact their generation through works or claims of wisdom or divinity. Finally, Toynbee comes to Jesus Christ and finds there is no comparison. Listen. "When we first set out on the quest we found ourselves moving in the midst of a mighty marching host; but as we have pressed forward on our way the marchers, company by company, have been falling out of the race. The first to fail were the swordsmen, the next the archaists, the next the futurists, the next the philosophers, until at length there were no more human competitors left in the running. In the last stage of all, our motley host of would-be saviors, human and divine, has dwindled to a single company of none but gods; and now the strain has been testing the staying-power of these last remaining runners, notwithstanding their superhuman strength. At the final ordeal of

death, few, even of these would-be saviour-gods have dared to put their title to the test by plunging into the icy river. And now as we stand and gaze with our eyes fixed upon the farther shore, a single figure rises from the flood, and straightway fills the whole horizon. There is the Savior; 'and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand; he shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied.'"

Even those who did not profess to be followers of Jesus Christ refused to deny that He—Jesus—was unique in history. The Jewish historian, Josephus, writing only fifty years after Christ's death and resurrection said, "Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was the Christ and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him for he appeared to them alive again the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians so named from him are not extinct at this day."

In our own time, Sholem Ash wrote: "Jesus Christ is the outstanding personality of all time...No other teacher—Jewish, Christian, Buddhist, Mohamedan—is still a teacher whose teaching is such a guidepost for the world we live in. Other teachers may have something basic for an Oriental, an Arab, or an Occidental; but every act and word of Jesus has value for all of us. He became the Light of the World. Why shouldn't I, a Jew, be proud of that."

Even those antagonistic to religion wouldn't hide their admiration of Jesus. Goethe, the great genius, viewing the march of history, confessed, "if ever the Divine appeared on earth, it was in the Person of Christ...I esteem the gospels to be thoroughly genuine, for there shines forth from them the reflected splendor of a sublimity, proceeding from the person of Jesus Christ, and of as Divine a kind as was ever manifested on earth."

The French deist Rousseau adds, "Can the Person whose history the Gospels relate be Himself a man? What sweetness, what purity in His manners! What affecting goodness in His institutions! ...What profound wisdom in His discourses! What presence of mind, what ingenuity of justice in His replies! Yes, if the life and death of Socrates are those of a philosopher, the life and death of Jesus Christ are those of a God."

They are questions that won't go away. In every human breast—man, woman, boy, girl—in every corner of the world—the same questions arise in a thousand different languages. "Is there a God?" "Who is God?" "Does He love me?" "How can I please

Him?" "How can my sins be forgiven?" "Is there life after death?" "Where will I go after I die?"

So we run in different directions—to different religions, teachers, prophets and would-be saviors—desperately seeking answers. Many offer a way to please the Deity—using different names for God. But only one—Jesus—dares to say "I am the way." Many say, "You will find truth in our religion." Only Christ says with authority, "I am the truth." Other prophets and religions offer vague hopes and visions of an afterlife. Here comes Jesus Christ saying, "I am the life", and guarantees that those who trust in Him have (that's present tense) the assurance of eternal life and forgiveness of their sins. He speaks of a future in heaven and inheriting a new sin—free earth with such authority that none dared—or dare—to question it.

Today, this incredible Savior offers to enter and change your life. That's because—unlike other religious teachers—He is not dead. The facts attest to His resurrection and millions of transformed lives—mine included—offer proof of what Jesus said, "I am He that lives and was dead, and, behold, I am alive forever more."

A nineteenth century writer put it this way; "He [Jesus] was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another village, where He worked in a carpenter shop until he was thirty. Then for three years He was an itinerant preacher. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never had a family or owned a home. He didn't go to college. He never visited a big city. He never traveled two hundred miles from the place where He was born. He did none of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but Himself.

"He was only thirty-three when the tide of public opinion turned against Him. His friends ran away. One of them denied him. He was turned over to His enemies and went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a cross between two thieves.

"While He was dying, His executioners gambled for His garments, the only property He had on earth. When He was dead, He was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend. Nineteen centuries have come and gone, and today He is the central figure of the human race.

"All the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever sailed, all the parliaments that ever sat, all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man on this earth as much as that one solitary life."

Now you have one solitary life—your own. What will you do with it? What will you do with Jesus?!

To try to reduce Jesus Christ to a bite-sized morsel of another “good teacher” so we can swallow what we like or spit Him out whole just won’t work. Listen to what a former agnostic named

C. S. Lewis had to say about Jesus. “I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: ‘I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.’ That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a mad man or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”

In the book “Ten Scientists Look at Life,” George Schweitzer writes: “Man has changed his world in a remarkable way, but has not been able to alter himself. Since this problem is basically a spiritual one, and since man is naturally bent toward evil (as history attests), the sole way that man can be changed is by God. Only if a man commits himself to Christ Jesus and submits himself to the Holy Spirit for guidance can he be changed. Only in this miraculous transformation rests hope for the atom-awed, radio-activity-ruffled world of our day and its inhabitants.”

What’s so special about Jesus? He was sinless—so He can forgive your sins and mine. He loves you unconditionally because as John Stott said: “Jesus was sinless because He was selfless. Such selflessness is love. And God is love.”

Jesus asked His disciples two questions. “Who do other men say that I am?” (They gave the various opinions.) Then “Who do you say that I am?” When Peter said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God”, Peter was praised for passing the test. Now, the Spirit of God poses that question from Jesus to you and me—“Who do you say that I am?” Ask God to forgive your sins and He will do it. Invite Jesus to enter and rule your heart and life and He will do it. Begin to read the gospels and the Holy Spirit will turn on the lights. Find other believers who love Christ and the Scriptures, and your new faith won’t die out like a single log placed on the hearth. Logs on fire together in the fireplace burn bright with warmth and light.

And one final request. Write me an e-mail and let us know you have made your decision to trust Jesus Christ as your Savior and follow Him as your Lord. Jim will give the address as we say good bye. My prayer for you—wherever you are around this hurting world—is that you will discover more and more—day by day—what is so special about Jesus!