

## Jesus Christ, the Man

A Saviour was promised many times in the Old Testament, and in Isaiah we are told he is to be ‘a son’. Isaiah 9:6: ‘For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.’

We are so used to thinking of Jesus as our Saviour that we perhaps forget to consider his masculinity. This masculinity was not incidental – God had promised a boy. And eventually that boy was born, conceived of the Holy Spirit in the Virgin Mary.<sup>1</sup>

He grew into manhood in a humble Galilean home, preparing for the three years of earthly ministry that culminated with his pre-ordained death on the cross.

Jesus Christ was the perfect man – ‘tempted in all points as we are yet without sin’ (Heb. 4:12). So how did he conduct himself as a man? And is there anything we can learn from the New Testament narratives concerning his life on earth that we can apply to the role of a husband?

### **A man who loved much**

Jesus shows himself repeatedly as a compassionate man. Right at the beginning of his ministry Jesus and his mother are at a wedding in Cana and the host runs out of wine. Even though Jesus tells his mother that it is not yet time to reveal his true identity, he accedes to her request

– turning water into wine and sparing the host of the wedding from embarrassment.<sup>2</sup>

Jesus also showed great wisdom and tact in dealing with his fellow man. He deals with people according to his knowledge of them. He refused to be drawn by the Pharisees, ‘for he knew what was in a man’ (John 2:24-25). We see him next in John’s gospel interact with Nicodemus, getting straight to the point with this great teacher of the law. Yet later with the Samaritan woman (John 4) he works round to his point more gently, drawing the woman into an all-important conversation about her position before God. He *knew* men and women and sought to meet their need on the basis of that knowledge.

The ‘rich young ruler’ came to Jesus asking the most important question of all – ‘what must I do to inherit eternal life?’ Jesus rehearsed the last six commandments and the young man claimed somewhat remarkably that he had kept them all.

Although this could only have been true in terms of outward observance, we are nevertheless told that Jesus ‘looked at him and loved him’ (Mark 10:21). This man eventually went away with sorrow because he had not heard what he wanted to hear – yet he was loved by Christ.

The disciple John was so amazed that Jesus could love him that he often referred to himself as the ‘disciple whom Jesus loved.’<sup>3</sup> In several places Jesus talks specifically of his love for his disciples.<sup>4</sup>

Lazarus, Mary and Martha were brother and sisters well known to Jesus. In John chapter 11 we read that ‘Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus’ (John 11:5). The sisters sent word to Jesus to tell him ‘Lord the one you *love* is sick’ (John 11:3). When Jesus arrived at the tomb of his friend Lazarus we are told he wept, and the Jews present said ‘See how he loved him!’ (John 11:34-36).

The miracles Jesus did in his earthly ministry were signs that he was the expected Messiah.<sup>5</sup> But if we look at the miracles themselves they were always done out of compassion for his fellow man, never just as signs to display his power. In fact he refused to be drawn into doing that.<sup>6</sup> Instead he healed people, fed them, and even raised some from the dead, out of compassion and love for humanity.

And of course Jesus loved his Father: ‘But the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me’ (John 14:31).

### **What greater love than Calvary?**

But what greater love can anybody show for his fellow man than that he is prepared to lay down his life for them? John tells us: 'It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love' (John 13:1).

Calvary was surely the greatest outpouring of love the world has ever seen. Truly, love to the unlovely was shown in this, the world's most selfless act.

Jesus was a man who loved much. His was not a fickle, sentimental love, but a love born out of compassion and according to knowledge. It was a love that resulted in action – courageous and dramatic action toward the object of his love, the church.

### **A man who took responsibility**

Supremely, Jesus took the responsibility for the great mission given him by the Father, that of securing the church. So he left his heavenly home, came to our world and offered himself as a sacrifice for sin, so that we could be forgiven and restored. Though he was rich (in heaven), Jesus became poor for our sakes, assuming the form of a servant.<sup>7</sup>

And he did not disappoint. He fulfilled the task the Father gave him. Jesus could pray to his Father: 'I have finished the work which you have given me to do ... While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled' (John 17:4, 12).

He took responsibility for his great work even when he shrank from doing it. He cried out to his Father in Gethsemane while he awaited his arrest: 'My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. But not as I will, but as you will' (Matthew 26:39).

Jesus also took responsibility in many lesser situations in the New Testament. He fed the crowds that followed him.<sup>8</sup> And when he could no longer take responsibility for his mother as he was dying on the cross, John 19:26-27 records that '....he turned to the disciple he loved and said [to Mary], "Dear woman here is your son" and to the disciple

“Here is your mother”. From that time on the disciple took her into his home.’

Jesus accepted great responsibilities and faithfully discharged them – first as a man but supremely as our Saviour, paying the ultimate price in his voluntary separation from his Father and in his death on the cross.

### **A man of authority**

Let us remind ourselves who this man Christ Jesus is. Colossians 1:15-17 says:

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

So it should come as no surprise that as a man he demonstrated great authority and courage in his earthly ministry. We read that: ‘When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law’ (Matthew 27:28, 29).

He said of himself that ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me’ (Matthew 28:18).

When Jesus went up to the temple he was dismayed to see the money changers and cattle traders dominating the Gentile court. He made a whip of cords and drove out the animals and money changers and turned over their tables.<sup>9</sup>

Jesus was also a leader of men. With authority he calls his disciples – ordinary working men who leave everything to be with him as they respond to the master’s call.<sup>10</sup>

He was not afraid of difficult questions and did not dissemble when confrontation was unavoidable. He answered the catch-question about paying taxes to the occupying Roman powers with his famous words,

‘Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s’ (Matthew 22:21).

When necessary he confronted the powerful Pharisees – even telling them at one point ‘you [belong to] your father the devil’ (John 8:44).

Yet Jesus did not stand on his obvious authority. He rarely made a show of it. So his first appearance in the New Testament as a grown man is at the Jordan, being baptised by John the Baptist. Even though as the Son of God he was greater than his cousin John, he was happy to submit to John’s baptism – to ‘fulfill all righteousness’ (Matthew 3:13-17).

And how did the Father respond to this? ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased’ (Matthew 3:17).

Our heavenly father was pleased with Christ’s humility and submission. Jesus Christ had unsurpassed authority and yet amazing humility. Those two things really can go together.

Although Jesus could be humble he never denied what he was. In John 8:52-54, while affirming that he is greater than Abraham he says that the honour he has comes from God. He spoke truthfully and clearly answering specific questions about himself.

### **A faithful man**

Jesus was a loyal and faithful friend to many – Lazarus, Mary, and Martha, for example – but particularly to the disciples. How many times they misunderstood him and let him down, not least in Gethsemane when they could not even stay awake to support him in his great trial. Yet he comforts them and prays for them (John 14:1-3; 17:6-19).

But above all he was faithful to his heavenly Father in that he finished the task he was sent to do, regardless of the personal cost to himself.<sup>11</sup>

### **A perfect man**

Jesus Christ possessed all the qualities we have sketched above and possessed by him in full measure. In fact, he was the only perfect man that

ever lived. I hope to show that the combination of love, responsibility, authority, and faithfulness that Jesus displayed in his earthly ministry, are also displayed towards his church as he ministers as the risen Lord to her – setting a bench-mark for the Christian husband.

While these qualities are not exclusively masculine ones, Jesus Christ was nevertheless expressing perfect manhood by exercising them. It follows that any Christian man with a role to fulfil for his heavenly Father – in our case that of a Christian husband – will want to emulate his Saviour and strive to attain these same qualities.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 1:18

<sup>2</sup> John 2:1-11

<sup>3</sup> For example: John 19:26

<sup>4</sup> For example John 15:9

<sup>5</sup> John 4:54

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 12:39

<sup>7</sup> 2 Corinthians 8:9; Philippians 2:6-11

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 14:13-21

<sup>9</sup> John 2:15

<sup>10</sup> Matthew 4:18-22

<sup>11</sup> John 19:30