



Why Jesus? Part 4 - Jesus is the Christ

April 28, 2024

“Why Jesus?” - A series about sharing our faith stories about why we follow Jesus and the difference he makes in our lives.

Why Jesus? Jesus is the Christ

Christ is not the last name of Jesus, but his title. The word “Christ” comes from the Greek word “Khristos” (Χριστός). “Khristos” is the Greek translation of the word “Messiah” (המשיח) from Hebrew. The phrase: Melek ha-Ma-SHEE-ahkh (מלך המשיח) is used thirty-nine times in the Old Testament and means “The Anointed King”. So, to say Jesus is the Christ is to say that he is the Messiah, the anointed king of God’s people.

Sometimes we talk about “Jesus” and “Christ” as if they were separate people.

Sometimes our descriptions of the “human Jesus” exist in such tension with the “Cosmic Christ” that they sound like two different people. We like to describe the “Human Jesus” as a poor, ascetic nomad who was known for his wise teachings, helpful healings, and his humble servant’s heart. But we describe the “Cosmic Christ” as this divine king who is powerful and mighty and who cleanses our sins, conquers Satan, and judges the nations. We must remember that not only are they one and the same, but that *without the right Jesus, we get the wrong Christ*. Many cruel and terrible things have been done in the name of Christ by doing the opposite of what Jesus taught his followers.

Jesus on Violence and Enemies - Matthew 5:38-39, 43-45a

38 “You have heard the law that says the punishment must match the injury: ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ **39** But I say, do not resist an evil person! If someone slaps you on the right cheek, offer the other cheek also.”

43 “You have heard the law that says, ‘Love your neighbor’ and hate your enemy. **44** But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! **45** In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven.”

Jesus on Judgment - Matthew 7:1-3

1 “Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. **2** For you will be treated as you treat others. The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged. **3** And why worry about a speck in your friend’s eye when you have a log in your own?”

Jesus undermines our expectation of a violent and judgmental Messiah.

Even Jesus’s own apostles struggled to understand his mission. After his resurrection, his followers ask when the time is right for him to free Jerusalem from the Romans, restore people to godly living, and take up a throne here on earth (Acts 1:6-8). Jesus instead says that it is not his or his followers' mission to assume earthly political power, but to be witnesses to the Good News of the resurrection letting everyone in the world know that God’s blessing is upon them and that they will be given the gift of the Holy Spirit.

And also, we miss the point of Jesus if we forget that he is the Christ.

Jesus is about saving the world and grant eternal life - John 3:16-17

16 “For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. **17** God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.”

Romans 6:22-23

22 But now you are free from the power of sin and have become slaves of God. Now you do those things that lead to holiness and result in eternal life. **23** For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Because Jesus is Christ, he has the power to save.

Why Jesus?

Because Jesus is the Christ, we know the true heart of God. And because the Christ is Jesus, we know that Jesus has the power and authority to grant us eternal life.

REFLECTIONS

1. Think about the ways you have heard “Jesus” described and “Christ” described. Have their descriptions ever sounded incongruent with one another?
2. When have you experienced someone using the name of “Christ” to do something that Jesus would never have done?
3. How does the way Jesus teaches about violence and judgment inform just what kind of Messiah he is?
4. In what ways may we misunderstand the “human Jesus” if we forget that he is indeed the Christ and Messiah?
5. How would you answer the question “Why Jesus?” in your own life?
Why do you follow him?
What difference does he make in your life?