

JESUS CHRIST - HIS MORAL EXCELLENCE PART 2

**JESUS' MORAL EXCELLENCE AS REVEALED IN THE GOSPELS
AND NEW TESTAMENT LETTERS**

**Scripture Quotations are from the
New American Standard Bible 1995**

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Jesus Christ – His Moral Excellence

Part 2

A Letter to The Roman Senate

The following is a translation of a letter sent by Publius Lentulus to the Roman Senate during the Roman Empire period.

“There appeared in these days a man of great virtue, named Jesus Christ, who is yet among us; of the Gentiles accepted for a prophet of truth; but his disciples call him the Son of God. He raiseth the dead, and cureth all manner of disease. A man of stature somewhat tall and comely, with a very reverend countenance, such as the beholder must both love and fear. ¹

Josephus also mentions Jesus² as does Lentulus, but the descriptions of him by these writers are without scriptural verification. Their references to him are of course disputed by the enemies of Christ. Yet, the very mention of him as a living person corroborates the apostolic witness to his existence.

This lesson discusses Jesus’ moral excellence and answers the question: “Was Jesus the invention of the apostles?”

The summary of this topic and the proposition of this study have been well stated by another who wrote,

"His moral glory consists of the perfections which marked his earthly life and ministry; perfections that attached to every relation he sustained, and to every circumstance in which he was found." The proposition is, "The moral glory of Jesus Christ as set forth in the four gospels cannot be the product of the unaided human intellect, that only the Spirit of God is competent to

¹ Tan, Paul Lee: *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations* : A Treasury of Illustrations, Anecdotes, Facts and Quotations for Pastors, Teachers and Christian Workers. Garland TX : Bible Communications, 1996, c1979

² Josephus, the famed Jewish historian, lived from A.D. 37 to 95. He seems to record the death and resurrection of Jesus as a fact. In Vol. II, Book XVIII, Chap. III, page 3 of his *Jewish Antiquities*, he wrote:

“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 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.”

execute this matchless portrait of the Son of Man." (W.G. Morehead, *The Fundamentals*, vol. iii, p 42).

Jesus Christ – His moral glory

Points to examine:

Jesus and the kingdom of God

Jesus and human history

His relation to the forces of nature

His relation to mankind

His relation to God

Conclusion

This lesson deals with what is true moral value: the moral excellence of Jesus Christ.

In Part 1 we looked at:

His relation to sin – He never confessed sin, but He denounced self-righteousness; He was tempted, but did not sin; He forgave sin and He gave Himself as a sacrifice for sin.

His relation to law – Jesus was a lawgiver (He gave no authorities other than Himself); He fulfilled the Law; He declared Himself Lord and Judge.

Jesus – and the kingdom of God

His relation to law suggests a kingdom in which the law operates.

John 18:33 Therefore Pilate entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus and said to Him, “Are You the King of the Jews?” 34 Jesus answered, “Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?” 35 Pilate answered, “I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You to me; what have You done?” 36 Jesus answered, “**My kingdom is not of this world.**³ If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm.” 37 Therefore Pilate said to Him, “So You are a king?” Jesus answered, “**You say correctly that I am a king.**⁴ For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.”

- Jesus said that His kingdom was not of this world.
- Jesus confirmed to Pilate that He was a king.

Jesus possesses divine power.

He spoke and things came into existence.

Hebrews 1:1 **God**, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, 2 in these last days **has spoken to us in His Son**, whom He appointed heir of all things, **through whom also He made the world.** 3 And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and **upholds all things by the word of His power.** When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4 having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they.

- God made the world through His Son.
- This indicates Jesus’ power over the material realm.

³ κόσμος 4 the circle of the earth, the earth. 5 the inhabitants of the earth, men, the human race. 6 the ungodly multitude; the whole mass of men alienated from God, and therefore hostile to the cause of Christ. 7 world affairs, the aggregate of things earthly. 7a the whole circle of earthly goods, endowments riches, advantages, pleasures, etc, which although hollow and frail and fleeting, stir desire, seduce from God and are obstacles to the cause of Christ.

⁴ Highlighted emphasis is mine throughout the lesson, author.

Legal and moral authority is in God.

Jesus said,

Matthew 28:18 “**All authority has been given to me** in heaven and on earth...”

Romans 13:1 Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For **there is no authority except from God**, and those which exist are established by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.

John 19:10 So Pilate said to Him, “You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?” 11 Jesus answered, “**You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above**; for this reason he who delivered Me to you has the greater sin.”

- The source of legal and moral authority is God.
- Jesus possesses all authority.

The “Law of Christ” is His wielding of spiritual authority:

1 Corinthians 9:20 To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law; 21 to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under **the law of Christ**, so that I might win those who are without law.

Galatians 6:2 Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the **law of Christ**.

Jesus – His message concerning the kingdom of God

The idea of kingdom is central in the teaching of Jesus.

He taught that the kingdom was "at hand,"⁵ --

Mark 1:14, 15 -- "and after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, saying,

⁵ Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). In *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 631). United Bible Societies. ἐγγίζωb: the occurrence of a point of time close to a subsequent point of time—‘to approach, to come near, to approximate.’

“The time is fulfilled, and **the kingdom of God is at hand**; repent and believe in the gospel.”

That it "cometh without observation", "Is within you"

Luke 17:20 “Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, he answered them and said, ‘the kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, “look, here it is!” or “there it is!” for behold, the kingdom of God is **in your midst**.”

- “in your midst” or “within you.” This is in keeping with the Jewish idea that the kingdom of God was the same as the rule of God.⁶
- The term “kingdom of heaven” was a euphemism for “kingdom of God.”⁷

And that it is spiritual,

John 18:36 -- "Jesus answered, 'my kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then my servants would be fighting, that I might not be delivered up to the Jews; but as it is **my kingdom is not of this realm**.⁸"

Confessed himself to be the "king",

Luke 23:3 -- "And Pilate asked him, saying ‘Are you the King of the Jews?’ And he answered him and said, ‘**It is as you say**.’”

C. H. Dodd in his book, *The Founder of Christianity*, denied that Jesus had confessed himself before Pilate. Dodd argued that Jesus said, “The words are yours,” or “Have it so if you choose.” Yet one must remember what Pilate wrote to be put on the cross: “The King of the Jews,” and it was written in three languages. Pilate was certainly convinced that Jesus said He was King of the Jews.

⁶ Edersheim, A. (1896). *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Vol. 1, p. 267). New York: Longmans, Green, and Co. “A review of many passages on the subject shows that, in the Jewish mind, the expression ‘Kingdom of Heaven’ referred, not so much to any particular period, as in general to the Rule of God—as acknowledged, manifested, and eventually perfected. Very often it is the equivalent for personal acknowledgment of God: the taking upon oneself of the ‘yoke’ of ‘the Kingdom,’ or of the commandments—the former preceding and conditioning the latter.”

⁷ Ibid., Edersheim, A, Vol. 1, p. 266.

⁸ realm - ἐνθεν, ἐντεῦθεν [enteuthen /ent yoo then/] adv. AV translates as “hence” or, “on either side, and “from hence” three times. 1 from this place, hence.

Declared the nature of the king and kingdom,

John 8:36-38 -- "If therefore the son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed. I know that you are Abraham's offspring; yet you seek to kill me, because my word has no place in you. I speak the things which I have seen with my father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from your father."

Jesus stated the conditions of membership in the kingdom, the reward of laboring in it, and the principles on which the rewards are to be given.

"What manner of man is this who assumes the position of sovereignty in the religious realm and who discharges an office which seems no less than divine in a world of spiritual?" (Mullins, p 103).

Would the Apostles have invented such a man?

Jesus – and human history

Jesus stated that He could control events and forces in the world and bring his kingdom to its consummation.

Jesus predicted in outline the spiritual history of the human race.

Out of his declarations concerning the kingdom arises the question of **providence**. Can he control events and forces in the world and carry his kingdom to its consummation? His own answer is clear and confident, Matthew 24 and 25.

In the gospel of Luke Jesus predicted the destruction of Jerusalem and the ensuing Diaspora of the Jews,

Luke 21:10 Then He continued by saying to them, "Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, 11 and there will be great earthquakes, and in various places plagues and famines; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven. 12 "But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name's sake.

In verses 13 through 19 Jesus assures His disciples that all they would suffer is known, and that Jesus would guide them through the ordeal.

And,

Luke 21:20 "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near. 21 "Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city; 22 because these are days of

vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled. 23 “Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people; 24 **and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.**

- Jesus described to the disciples what would become of the Jewish people and their nation including the city of Jerusalem in the ensuing centuries.

Other Examples of Jesus’ confident predictions:

Matthew 24:1 Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. 2 And He said to them, “Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down.”

- Jesus confidently predicted the destruction of the Jewish temple.

Matthew 24:6 “You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end.

- Jesus predicted in outline the spiritual history of the race and claimed that his was the hand upon the helm guiding the consummation,

Matthew 28:18-20 -- “And Jesus came up and spoke to them saying, ‘All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the father and the son and the holy spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’”

Jesus – His relation to the forces of nature.

Blighting of the fig tree.

Matthew 21:18 Now in the morning, when He was returning to the city, He became hungry. 19 Seeing a lone fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it except leaves only; and He said to it, “**No longer shall there ever be any fruit from you.**” And at once the fig tree withered.

- Jesus had the power to kill a tree with his words.

Calming the storm.

Project Storm Fury was an attempt by the meteorological experts to control hurricanes. It failed. A rainmaking attempt by experts from the weather bureau over the Florida everglades got out of hand one summer's eve -- they had a windstorm and cloudburst over Coral Gables.

Mark 4:35 On that day, when evening came, He said to them, "Let us go over to the other side." 36 Leaving the crowd, they took Him along with them in the boat, just as He was; and other boats were with Him. 37 And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up. 38 Jesus Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" 39 **And He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Hush, be still." And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm.**

- Jesus controlled the forces of nature.

Feeding the multitude.

Matthew 14:15 When it was evening, the disciples came to Him and said, "This place is desolate and the hour is already late; so send the crowds away, that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves." 16 But Jesus said to them, "They do not need to go away; you give them something to eat!" 17 They said to Him, **"We have here only five loaves and two fish."** 18 And He said, "Bring them here to Me." 19 Ordering the people to sit down on the grass, He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up toward heaven, He blessed the food, and breaking the loaves He gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds, 20 and they all ate and were satisfied. They picked up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve full baskets. 21 There were about five thousand men who ate, besides women and children.

- Jesus could produce food in abundance from a small amount.

Walking on the water.

Matthew 14:22 Immediately He made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side, while He sent the crowds away. 23 After He had sent the crowds away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone. 24 But the boat was already a long distance from the land, battered by the waves; for the wind was contrary. 25 **And in the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea.**

- Jesus was master of the storm upon the sea.
- Jesus used water as his pathway.

Casting out demons.

Matthew 8:14 When Jesus came into Peter's home, He saw his mother-in-law lying sick in bed with a fever. 15 He touched her hand, and the fever left her; and she got up and waited on Him. 16 **When evening came, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed; and He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were ill.** 17 This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet: "He Himself took our infirmities and carried away our diseases."

- Demonic powers and diseases were subject to Him.

The recorded relation of Christ to nature is clear. Blighting the fig tree, calming the storm, feeding the multitudes, walking on the water, casting out demons demonstrates his power over them.

Jesus – His relation to mankind

Jesus accepted the title of Messiah, the Christ

Matthew 16:16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

Mark 14:61 But He kept silent and did not answer. Again the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, **"Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?"** 62 **And Jesus said, "I am; and you shall see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN."**

- Peter confessed Jesus as the Christ. Jesus praised him for his confession.
- The High Priest asked Jesus if He was the Son of God. Jesus answered, "I am."

He claimed to be the "Son of David",

Mark 12:35-37 -- and Jesus answering began to say, as he taught in the temple, "How is it that the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? David himself said in the holy spirit, 'the Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I put Thine enemies beneath thy feet.' David himself calls him 'Lord;' and so in what sense is he his son?"

- His favorite title was "Son of Man," relating himself with the human family.

While attached to men, he is apart from them:

Jesus called all men unto himself, setting himself apart from the world of men,

Matthew 11:28 "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. 29 "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. 30 "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

In prayer he saw himself in a different relation to God from other men:

it is "I," "me," "they," "them;" it is never "we," "us," etc.

Even while with men He is apart from them.

John 12:27 "Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. 28 "Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came out of heaven: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." 29 So the crowd of people who stood by and heard it were saying that it had thundered; others were saying, "An angel has spoken to Him." 30 Jesus answered and said, "This voice has not come for My sake, but for your sakes. 31 "Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. 32 "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself."

- In the above passage Jesus both sets Himself apart from the world of men, and shows that He is in a different relation to God than other men.

He accepted the worship of men,

Matthew 14:33 -- and those who were in the boat worshiped him; but some were doubtful.

Matthew 2:2 "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him."

John 9:37 Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him, and He is the one who is talking with you." 38 And he said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped Him.

At the same time he taught that God only is the object of worship and service,

Matthew 4:10 -- then Jesus said to him, "begone, Satan! For it is written, '**you shall worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.**'"

Jesus – His relation to God

He maintained an unbroken fellowship with God

John 8:29 "And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him."
John 8:16; 16:32

John 16:32 "Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.

He claimed to reveal the Father.

John 14:7 "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him."
8 Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." 9 Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? **He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?**

He declared his own omnipresence

Matthew 28:18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

He admitted equality with the Father

See John 14:9 above.

John 5:18 For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.

- Jesus called God His own Father.

Jesus Christ – His moral excellence conclusion

Nothing is more obvious than the commonplace axiom: every effect requires an adequate cause.

"How did the evangelists solve this mighty problem of humanity with such perfect originality and precision? Only two answers are rationally possible:

- they had before them the personal and historical Christ;
- they wrote by inspiration of the Spirit of God. It cannot be otherwise."⁹

In the face of Jesus's excellence and perfection what value does any human solution have –even Balfour's "Moral values which unites nations." Little, if any.

The conclusion: such a character could not be invented who said on his cross: "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Why did Jesus claim such a relationship to:

Sin

Law

The kingdom

Providence

Nature

Mankind

God?

Because He is God, Who came in the flesh, so that frail and sinful humanity might not die in sin!

⁹ (morehead, op. Cit. P 55).

Review

1. Jesus said that His kingdom is not of this _____.
2. Jesus told Pilate that He was a _____.
3. God has spoken to us in these last days in _____.
4. Jesus upholds all things by the _____ of His _____.
5. Jesus said that _____ had been given to Him in heaven and on earth.
6. The source of legal and moral _____ is God.
7. Jesus taught that the kingdom was _____.
8. Jesus confidently predicted human _____.
9. Jesus was master of the forces of _____.
10. Jesus stilled a storm with the words, “_____, _____. ”
11. Jesus fed a multitude of people with _____ and two _____.
12. Jesus cast out _____ with a word, and healed all who were _____.
13. Jesus accepted the title of _____.
14. Jesus accepted the _____ of men.
15. The apostles and disciples of Jesus had before them the _____ and _____ Christ.
16. The apostles and writers of the New Testament wrote by the _____ of the spirit of God.
17. Such a character as Jesus could not have been _____.