WHO IS THE MAN ON THE CROSS?

The Divinity of Jesus Christ

By far the most asked question among men and women in any discussion of faith and religion since the beginning is this: *Who is God, and what is His Name? Is Jesus Christ of Nazareth really God?* Put simply, **Who is the Man on the cross?**

About fifteen years ago, in the office of our youth pastor here at CLF, a conversation began about how to answer difficult questions, especially how the creation/evolution debate affects young people's faith. That youth pastor was a younger Pastor Matt. So drawing on that conversation, I have written a parable about a consciousness (fictional) father whose child attends our youth ministry. It's about looking at two ***irreconcilable worldviews***, rationalism vs biblical revelation, and looking at these complex issues squarely in the face and answering in truth and love. Our aim is **not to *offend*** but to ***reveal*** the person of Christ. To encounter the Living God...Jesus!
Imagine this parent walks in and, very respectfully, says:

"Pastor, we want our children to grow up with good character, and we think church can help. Jesus taught good things. But to be honest, I don't believe the Bible. I've read it, and I grew up going to church now and then, until my parents stopped once we kids were grown. I believe in what science shows: everything developed over millions of years. Adam and Eve, Noah, Jonah, the Red Sea, Jesus walking on water, a real devil or hell — those are nice stories that teach right and wrong. Jesus was a good teacher, but not God. Honestly, like my parents, I don't see a need for God. My wife and I love each other, our kids are thriving, I love my job, and we give generously. So Pastor, why should I let you teach my children an outdated book about Jesus, one good teacher among many?"

So how do we answer this father?

I. *The Clash of Irreconcilable Worldviews*

First, we must ***see*** clearly that there are two **irreconcilable worldviews** meeting in that office. No amount of arguing will change settled unbelief.

Second, in response, we must ***stand*** on the clarity of the **scriptures that reveal the Divinity and Creator authority of Jesus Christ**.

Third, we must ***believe*** the very truths we are standing on, knowing the **evidences that transcend any argument** and help us grow a deep immovable faith.

Every person sees the world through a set of presuppositions learned in childhood, and these become their **worldview**. This parable sets two opposing worldviews side by side.

The father holds a secular, rationalistic worldview: ***nature*** *is all there is,* ***matter*** *has always existed,* ***time and chance*** *explain everything, and* ***God*** *is* ***optional***.

In our story, he confronts a young pastor whose worldview is Christ-centered and biblical, built on the presupposition that the words of Jesus, and all of ***Scripture, are absolute truth***. Biblical Christianity begins from the opposite presupposition: "**In the beginning God...**" meaning a supernatural God is already present as the **First Cause**-of everything!

"By faith we understand that the entire universe was formed at God's command, that what we now see did not come from anything that can be seen."
— Hebrews 11:3 NLT

So in fact these two starting points cannot be blended. **One of them must be wrong!**

Here is Jesus' diagnosis of the unbelieving, secular mind, those believing old lies with new labels, that ultimately leads us to spiritual "lukewarmness".

1. Divided (Matthew 6:24)
"No one can serve **two** masters..." trying to hold onto Jesus while bowing to the world's philosophies is called "**syncretism**". God repeatedly destroyed Israel for their syncretistic mixing of the sexual worship of idols and their practice of child sacrifice with practice of Judaism. Three Old Testament kings actually brought these child-sacrificing alters inside the courtyard of the temple of the Lord!

2. Ashamed (Mark 8:38)(Matthew 10:33)
"If anyone is **ashamed** of Me and my message...the Son of Man will be ashamed of him..."/ "but everyone who denies me here on earth, I will also deny before my father in heaven..." This shrinking back in shame or fear from confessing Jesus before men because it is embarrassing next to modern "science." ("***I am not ashamed because***...")

3. Mistaken (Matthew 22:29)
"Your **mistake** is that you don't know the Scriptures, and you don't know the power of God." This is Jesus' clear rebuke to the pride of the Sadducees, the rationalists of His day who trusted **human reason and their intellectual prowess** over the supernatural reality of God ***and*** His Word! They think they see, but really they are spiritually blind.

Scripture tells us to "**always be ready to give an answer to everyone who *asks* you a reason for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and respect**" (1 Peter 3:15). Notice the word ***asks***. Giving an ***answer*** to a curious, honest seeker is very different from arguing with someone who has already made up his mind, like this father. Arguments from science, history, or the benefits of church may clear away obstacles for an **open** heart, but they cannot create faith in a **closed** one. Unbelief is not first an intellectual problem; it is a spiritual one. Jesus said that if men will not hear Moses and the Prophets, "neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead" (Luke 16:31). Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Romans 10:17). The power to confront unbelief is not in our cleverness but in the Word itself, received and believed. So don't try to win the argument;

introduce him to Jesus, because only an ***personal encounter with the living Christ can change an irreconcilable worldview.*** (See Notes)

Revelation 4:9-11 NKJV says... "**Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, [10] *the twenty-four elders fall down before Him* who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: [11] "You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; *For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created."***

II. Maintaining a Clear Understanding of the Divinity and Creator Authority of Jesus Christ

The father in this story says Jesus was a good moral teacher. But Jesus never left us the option to assume He was ONLY a good teacher. A good teacher does not claim to be God, or accept worship, or forgive sins against others, or promise to raise the dead. Jesus did all of these.

He claimed eternal existence and the divine Name.
"I tell you the truth, before Abraham was even born, I AM!" (John 8:58 NLT). His hearers understood exactly what He meant; that is why they picked up stones to kill Him for blasphemy, because He stated openly that He was God! The Messiah.

He claimed oneness with the Father.
"The Father and I are one" (John 10:30 NLT). He and the Father are God! ***(The mystery of the Trinity.)***

He made eternal destiny depend on who He is.
"Unless you believe that I AM who I claim to be, you will die in your sins" (John 8:24 NLT).

This matters directly to our father's worldview. The New Testament does not simply say Jesus was sent ***by*** the Creator. It says **Jesus *is* the Creator.** The One on the cross is the One who made the wood of the cross and the hands of the men who nailed Him to it!

John 1:3 NLT says...
God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him.

Colossians 1:16–17 NLT says...
Everything was created through him and for him. He existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together.

Hebrews 1:3 adds that He **"sustains everything by the mighty power of his command."** The same Jesus this father calls merely a "moral teacher" is the One holding the atoms together sustaining the live in his own body! .

III. Evidences that transcends the argument: "Believe My Works, if nothing else!"

Jesus knew that most of us at one time or another in our development would have a crisis of reason. So He says in **John 10:38**,

"**Believe in the evidence of the miraculous works I have done, even if you don't believe Me. Then you will know and understand that the Father is in me, and I am in the Father.**

The naturalist says miracles are impossible because they break the laws of nature. He is right that they cannot be produced by nature or natural means. **That is precisely the point!** Jesus miracles fall outside of natural reason by natural means.

They fall into ***4*** categories: Authority over **substance and matter**, the **spirit realm**, the **physical body** and over our greatest enemy, ***death!***

Consider just ***3* of these miracles:

Raising Lazarus (John 11:38–44), (*pathology*)
Martha warned, **"The smell will be terrible."** meaning after four days, brain cells, which begin dying within minutes of the loss of oxygen would have been irreversibly destroyed. The body's own enzymes are now breaking down its cells and bacterial putrefaction would be well underway. Raising Lazarus required rebuilding billions of dead and decomposing cells, restoring circulation, and restoring an intact brain with memory and personality, all in an instant! (***God does not require eons of time to create anything!***)

Healing the man born blind (John 9:1–7), (*neurology and ophthalmology*). Seeing requires working eyes, an optic nerve, and a brain trained to interpret sight. In people blind from birth, the visual areas of the brain never develop normal vision processing.

Calming the storm (Mark 4:35–41), (*meteorology and physics).* A storm stores an enormous amount of energy in moving air and water.

The disciples amazed response , **"Who is this man? Even the wind and waves obey him!"** (**Mark 4:41 NLT**) is natural. This is the crisis of reason we all have when faced with the supernatural. That crisis is somehow clarified by having an **encounter** with **Jesus as God!** It sometimes only then, that we full **believe**!

The evidence revealed in these scriptures is meant to lead us to a Person (Jesus), and that Person leads us into **life**! For the believer, that evidence is everywhere, in nature, in our own bodies, and it is called General Revelation. Paul speaks of this in Romans 1:20...stating that man is without excuse not to seek to know God because of the obvious revelation of Him in His creation. **Ps 139;13-14 NKJV** says...

"You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. [14] I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well."

General Revelation: Consider in amazement how we are made!

The building of a **living** cell, the basic building block of our bodies, possesses an order that begins far below anything the eye can see. Many have proposed that the first living cell formed by random chance over long periods of time, as simple chemicals came together to produce three essential components: a cell membrane, a genetic code (DNA), and a way to generate energy (metabolism). Biochemist Michael Behe coined a term for systems like this: ***irreducible complexity***, meaning a system that **works only when all its essential parts are present at once.** The idea applies to the cell as well as to structures such as the human eye. Each component is absolutely required for the next; remove any one, and the whole system collapses!

Let's look at God's marvelous creation of the human body…

First, **Atoms:** Atoms, the basic building blocks of all living things and all matter, bond into molecules only according to fixed chemical laws, but they have no power to direct their own construction, so the information that orders them must come from outside themselves.

Then, **Molecules:** A molecule needs at least two electromagnetically bonded atoms, which follow chemical laws which the molecule didn't write. ***(irreducible complexity)***

The miracle of just one *living cell* needs three things at once: a **boundary** (membrane), a **source of energy** (metabolism), and a **genetic code** that can be copied (heredity). Without any one of them, it dies. Even the simplest known self-sustaining cell, a lab-made minimal bacterium, still needs 473 genes to survive. The simplest form of life is actually extremely complex. Honest observation of this ***irreducible complexity*** points to a clear conclusion: the probability of producing even one living cell by random chance is so small that it is effectively impossible.

(*Astronomer Fred Hoyle put the odds of the roughly 2,000 enzymes life needs forming by chance is "like a tornado assembling a 747 from a junkyard".*)

Now, the **miracle of just *one human body*,** which begins when two **cells** that become one. Sperm and egg join, and now that (single cell) already holds the complete set of instructions for building that one human body. (About 6 billion pairs of DNA sequences, or about a 1.6 gigabyte book of data) About a ***day*** later it divides for the first time; the next divisions follow roughly every twelve to twenty-four hours. By the end of the ***first*** week there is a tiny hollow ball of one to two hundred cells, not much bigger than the original egg. Each **cell** thereafter has the same 1.6 gigabytes of DNA data book stored within. Once a cell knows what it is, it reproduces itself making, skin, muscles cells, nerve cells and so on.

In the ***third*** week, the embryo organizes into three layers. The **outer** layer becomes the skin and the entire nervous system; the **middle** layer becomes muscle, bone, blood, the heart, and the kidneys; the **inner** layer becomes the lining of the gut, the lungs, and the liver. Around ***day twenty-two***, before most mothers are even sure they are pregnant, **a tiny heart begins to beat!** From those three layers, come roughly **four hundred distinct kinds** of **cells**.

These **cells** are not the same size. The sperm is the smallest cell; the egg is the largest, just barely visible to the naked eye; a single nerve cell can run from the base of the spine to the foot, about three feet long. An adult body holds **roughly thirty trillion cells**. These living **cells** don't live the same length of time: the gut lining is replaced every few days, the outer skin in about a month, red blood cells in about four months, while many brain cells last a lifetime. ***Every day, our adult bodies produce and replaces roughly three hundred billion cells, nearly four million every second!***

None of these cells function by chance or independently of other cells. A heart without blood vessels, a nerve without a brain, or an eye without the wiring to read its signals would be useless. The parts depend on one another from the start. This is the miracle evidence of **irreducible complexity.** Science admits that the transition from non-living chemistry to living cells has **never been demonstrated** in a laboratory. It remains an unsolved, with a real probability of it occurring randomly at zero. Not even ***one*** cell in ***your*** body is an accident. Nothing about you happened by chance! There is a Designer behind it all, and that ***Designer is Jesus..and He is God!***

And that is exactly what the scriptures say. **Colossians 1:15-17 NLT** says...

"**Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation, [16] for through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see- such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through him and for him. [17] He existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together."**

So how do we answer the father in the youth pastor's office? With respect and with honesty. We might say something like this:

"Thank you for coming in and being so honest. We would love to have your kids. But I want to be honest with you too. We won't just teach them to be good people. We are going to introduce them to Jesus, and we will tell them the truth about who He is: not only a good teacher, but God in the flesh, the Creator who made them, who died on a cross for their sins, and who rose again. The good character you want for them grows from knowing Him".

We do not argue anyone out of an irreconcilable world view. We win them the way every one of us was won: by being brought face to face with Jesus Christ...having an encounter with the Living God!