

The Difference Jesus Makes

Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC

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Text: Matthew 10:32-33

Purpose: The name of Jesus gives rise to many different feelings and emotions in a person. To the Muslims, Jesus is a prophet. To the Mormons, Jesus is an elder brother. To the Jews, he was a great teacher. But to Christians, Jesus is far more than these. He is our Lord, Savior, Master, closest Friend, Judge, and Redeemer. Jesus makes the difference between life and death – the difference between meaning and purpose and separation and damnation.

This past week I have been thinking about the name of Jesus. We hear so many people use the name of Jesus but do we really know the difference He makes? When I ride through downtown Wilson, there is a building that has a mural with just the name of Jesus written on the side of a building. That mural has been on that building for over 30 years.

Many people in various faith traditions claim to know Jesus, but exactly what do they think about Him? Some people believe Jesus was simply a good prophet. To others Jesus is like that elder brother we may have never had.

To some Jesus was a great teacher who presented the world with a good list of guidelines for life. But to a Christian, Jesus is more than that.

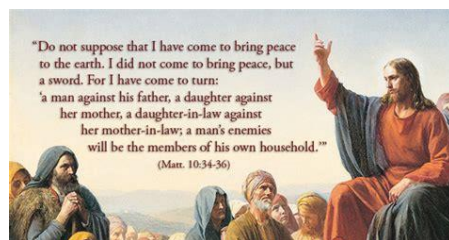


- He is our Lord – He was with God when all the world was created and He is the one that sustains it.
- He is our Master – our life’s direction and obedience need to be directed and led by what Jesus taught.
- He is our closest friend when all of our supposed friends and family abandon us.
- He is our judge and the standard by which we will be judged.
- He is our redeemer because He paid the penalty for our sin.

Jesus – that name above every name! But not all people define Jesus in the same way and thus Jesus can actually divide us instead of unite us.

The Theological Difference Jesus Makes

At the heart of every religious division around the world is Jesus. You would not think the “kind and lowly Jesus” would cause such division and

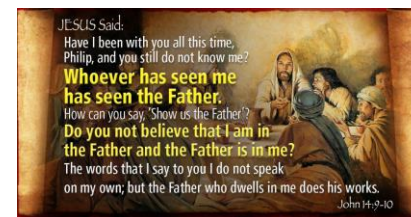


discord, but Jesus reminded his followers, *“Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a man’s enemies will be those of his own household.”* (Matt. 10:34-35)

Jesus recognized the kind of division His coming to earth would bring. Jesus came in the fullness of time, into a Jewish family, into a Jewish nation occupied by Rome. The Jews of Jesus’ day were looking for a Messiah that would

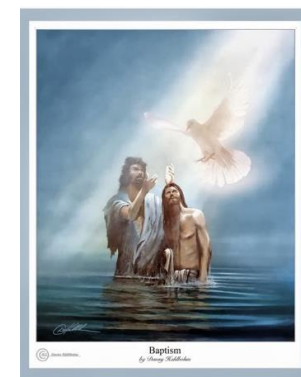
take over the throne of David and evict the Roman occupiers and establish the Davidic kingdom forever. Jesus was always talking about the Kingdom of God, and the disciples were looking for a place of honor in that kingdom.

Jesus had the nerve to stand before the disciples and say, *“If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father.”* (John 14:9) The disciples, especially Thomas, still didn’t get it.



Jesus stood among the Jews and talked about how He was able to give His followers eternal life, and no one would be able to snatch them out of His hand. Jesus triumphantly said to those gathered there that day, *“I and the Father are one.”* (John 10:28-30) To that statement, the Jews sought to kill Jesus. They actually took up stones in order to kill Him. Jesus’ coming caused discord and division.

Even though others rejected Jesus, God Himself found great pleasure in His Son. When Jesus came to John the Baptist at the Jordan River, Jesus sought to be baptized to *“fulfill all righteousness.”* The sinless Son of God came to demonstrate and model righteousness for us. When Jesus came up out of the water, the Spirit of God descended upon Him like a dove and rested upon Him. Then a voice out of heaven said, *“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”* (Matthew 3:17) All of Jesus’ life and ministry sought to do the will of His Heavenly Father. Even to the point of death, the death of the cross.



Jesus affirmed time and time again, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”* (John 14:6).

After Jesus’ death on the cross, and later resurrection, He told his followers that He would send another One to come and abide with them. That one was the Holy Spirit, the actual presence of God and Christ. This new relationship between God and man was mediated by the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross. By accepting Jesus as your savior, the presence of God actually comes and abides in you.

Jesus told his disciples just before He ascended back into heaven, that they were to go back to Jerusalem and wait, and the Holy Spirit would come in power and rest upon them. Ten days later, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came into the 120 believers that were waiting for God’s special power to come upon them. (Acts 2)



That same spirit that empowered the disciples then is the same Holy Spirit that lives in every believer today. Jesus makes the difference. Jesus’ sacrifice enabled the Spirit of God to come and be with us and His church today.

The unique relationship that God has with mankind is revealed in His relationship with Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Since the Nicene Creed in the 4th century, the church has universally accepted the doctrine of the Trinity.

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, of all that is, seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified.

He has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

That Jesus and the Holy Spirit were there with God in the very beginning. That they were neither created nor were they separated from God. When you have seen Jesus, you have seen the Father. When the Holy Spirit came, it was the Spirit of God residing in the believer’s heart and life. Jesus came as God in the flesh, fully revealing God as merciful, forgiving, accepting, loving, and self-sacrificing. But we also see that those that reject Jesus received harsh criticism – because they were rejecting the only Son of God – the only way of salvation – the only way back to God.

That is why Jesus’ appearance on the timeline of history is so divisive. People want salvation apart from Jesus Christ. They do not want to accept that the only way to God is through Jesus Christ. Many will say that the old rugged cross is a cruel hoax. But I am here to proclaim, Jesus makes the difference in my life and those that claim Him as their Savior.



So many professing Christians only want a token faith, a faith that doesn’t demand a lot from them. Jesus said, *“If you deny me, then He will deny you before God.”* (Matthew 10:33) Failure to surrender your life and heart over to Christ is a sure ticket to separation from God. As a matter of fact, you are already separated from God, the moment you are born into this world. Our inherited sin nature, our wayward hearts, has created within us an impure heart, one that will never see God. The only way in which we will ever see God is if we turn and accept Christ. Jesus makes the difference.

Some people today say that the spark of God lives within us. But our hearts are deceitfully wicked and are in need of a Savior. Jesus came to redeem us, and forgive us, and accept us into His family. He never forces Himself upon us; He gently knocks at the door of our heart and asks us to let Him in. Jesus said, *“Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.”* (Revelation 3:20) Jesus makes the difference for one that opens their heart to Christ.

The unbelieving world rejects the idea of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit as One. They would seek to separate Jesus from the Godhead.

Islam’s Theology of Jesus

You may be surprised to learn that those that follow the faith of Islam accept Jesus as a prophet of God. Followers of Islam are called Muslims. This faith was founded in the seventh century (610-632 A.D.) by the prophet Muhammad. They reject any idea that Jesus and the Father could be One. They believe Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary, but reject that He died on a cross. Since He did not die on a cross, therefore He was not resurrected. They reject the idea of original sin, and therefore reject the idea that one mans death could in some way atone for anyone else’s sins. Islam rejects the central claim of Jesus – that He was God in the flesh, fully God, fully man. There are many differences between Christianity and Islam – cultural, views on women, holy scriptures, etc., but the central key difference, is how we each view Jesus. You see, Jesus makes the difference.



Mormon’s Theology of Jesus

Those that follow the Mormon faith believe Jesus is our elder brother. The Mormon faith was founded in the seventeenth century (1820’s A.D.) by Joseph Smith. The Mormon’s reject the decision of the 4th century Nicene council because of its affirmation of the Trinity. They do not believe or accept that Jesus was, and is, a part of God. They see Jesus as an offspring of God, created. Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, felt that they have the true gospel, the true priesthood, and the true church. Since that decision concerning the doctrine of the Trinity in the 4th century, Mormon’s claim the church (Catholics and Protestants) has been wrong for 1500 years. That is why they wish to be called the “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”

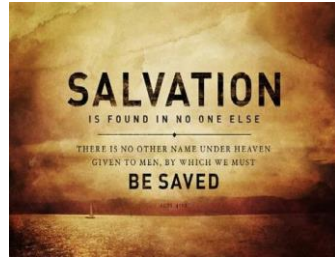
Mormons	Same	Christians
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Book of mormons • Doctrine and Covenants • Pearl of Great Price • Rejects that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are "one" The Holy Spirit is separate from God and Jesus. More than one God • Heavenly Father that has a physical body • Free to do good and evil • Has a second chance afterlife during a period of "teaming and preparation" after death • Afterlife: all spirits go to the spirit world. The good spends time in the spirit paradise while the evil go to prison • Hell: wicked enter "spirit prison" then considered "Outer Darkness" for eternity • Symbol: Cross is not used. Trumpet is seen atop of Mormon temples • Deny sin of human • Worship in chapel or temple • Salvation: works are more important 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has Jesus • Bible • Jesus is Son of God, savior • Believe the resurrection of Christ • Jesus died for us • Baptism • Lord's Supper • Salvation: works and faith <p>Christianity Vs. Mormonism</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are "one" • God does not have a body • Human has sin • Free to do whatever is wanted is not good • Bad souls are sent to Hell, a place of eternal torment and distance from God while believers go to Heaven eternally • Place of worship is Church • Symbols: cross, fish • Salvation: faith is more important • Jesus died for us because God wanted us to know about him directly.

But as you uncover more of their theology, you find that they actually believe they too will become as a god and rule and reign over a kingdom of their own. Their goal is to take all of their family with them to the Celestial Heaven where they will have spirit children for all eternity. That is why family is so critical to the Mormon faith. None of this teaching is found in the Bible. It is derived from their other holy writings such as the Book of Mormon, the Pearl of Great Price, and the Doctrine and Covenants.

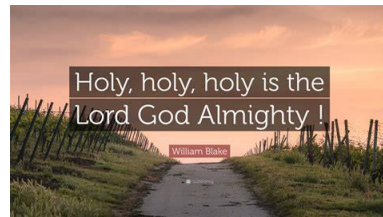
Mormon's attempt to pass themselves off as simply another denomination of Christianity, but they are far from historic Christianity. They are far from a biblical faith as found in the Bible. The primary difference is Jesus Christ.

Practical Difference Jesus Makes

Because Jesus is who He says He is – the Son of God – coeternal with God – we can say with all confidence that Jesus is our Lord, He is our Savior, He is our Master, He is our closest Friend, He is our Judge, and He is our Redeemer. He is not simply a “prophet” or an “elder brother,” He is our Salvation. That is why we worship and praise Him.



There is a tension in our walk with God between us and the transcendence of God – the high, holy, inapproachability, far away in the heavens, aspect of God. Songs like Holy, Holy, Holy, remind us of all the characteristics of God. His



purity, His goodness, His grace, His radiating power, His omniscience (all knowing), His omnipotence (all powerful), omnipresence (always present-everywhere). All of these speak of the transcendence of God.

We need a Holy God to redeem us from our un-holiness. We need a Holy God to save us from our sinfulness. We need a Holy God who transcends time, because we are limited in time. The ache of our soul cries for the connection with a Holy God.

When we open our hearts to God, we also experience his imminence. Just as God is transcendent (seemingly far away and Holy), He is also as near as our next breath. In



John 14, Jesus said this: *“I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever – the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be with you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.”* (v. 16-18)

The practical side of the difference Jesus makes includes the knowledge that we are not orphans in this world. We have a “come-along-side” us God in the midst of life. We can turn to God in our worst days. We can turn to Him in our seasons of struggle. We can hear Him guide us as we pray to Him. If we were to open the floor for a testimony of how God was with us in the worst of times, many of us could affirm, that God was with us. Jesus' Spirit made all the difference.

God is not so far away that He is not concerned about the things of our life. Sometimes we have the idea that God only wants us to talk with Him about the big things in life. But God is also concerned about the little things as well. Jesus even said, *“The very hairs of our head are numbered.”* God knows us and is concerned about our life.

THE HOT WATER BOTTLE¹ - A True Story By Helen Roseveare, Missionary to Africa

One night, in Central Africa, I had worked hard to help a mother in the labor ward; but in spite of all that we could do, she died leaving us with a tiny, premature baby and a crying, two-year-old daughter.



We would have difficulty keeping the baby alive. We had no incubator. We had no electricity to run an incubator, and no special feeding facilities. Although we lived on the equator, nights were often chilly with treacherous drafts.



A student-midwife went for the box we had for such babies and for the cotton wool that the baby would be wrapped in. Another went to stoke up the fire and fill a hot water bottle. She came back shortly, in distress, to tell me that in filling the bottle, it had burst. Rubber perishes easily in tropical climates. "...and it is our last hot water bottle!" she exclaimed. As in the West, it is no good crying over spilled milk; so, in Central Africa it might be considered no good crying over a burst water bottle. They do not grow on trees, and there are no drugstores down forest pathways. All right," I said, "Put the baby as near the fire as you safely can; sleep between the baby and the door to keep it free from drafts. Your job is to keep the baby warm."



The following noon, as I did most days, I went to have prayers with many of the orphanage children who chose to gather with me. I gave the youngsters various suggestions of things to pray about and told them about the tiny baby. I explained our problem about keeping the baby warm enough, mentioning the hot water bottle. The baby could so easily die if it got chilled. I also told them about the two-year-old sister, crying because her mother had died.



During the prayer time, one ten-year-old girl, Ruth, prayed with the usual blunt consciousness of our African children. "Please, God," she prayed, "send us a water bottle. It'll be no good tomorrow, God, the baby'll be dead; so, please send it this afternoon." While I gasped inwardly at the audacity of the prayer, she added by way of corollary, "...And while You are about it, would You please send a dolly for the little girl so she'll know You really love her?" As often with children's prayers, I was put on the spot. Could I honestly say, "Amen?" I just did not believe that God could do this. Oh, yes, I know that He can do everything: The Bible says so, but there are limits, aren't there?

The only way God could answer this particular prayer would be by sending a parcel from the homeland. I had been in Africa for almost four years at that time, and I had never, ever received a parcel from home. Anyway, if anyone did send a parcel, who would put in a hot water bottle? I lived on the equator!



¹ <http://www.truthorfiction.com/rumors/h/hotwaterbottle.htm> (accessed September 13, 2021)

Halfway through the afternoon, while I was teaching in the nurses' training school, a message was sent that there was a car at my front door. By the time that I reached home, the car had gone, but there, on the veranda, was a large twenty-two-pound parcel! I felt tears pricking my eyes. I could not open the parcel alone; so, I sent for the orphanage children. Together we pulled off the string, carefully undoing each knot. We folded the paper, taking care not to tear it unduly. Excitement was mounting. Some thirty or forty pairs of eyes were focused on the large cardboard box. From the top, I lifted out brightly colored, knitted jerseys. Eyes sparkled as I gave them out. Then, there were the knitted bandages for the leprosy patients, and the children began to look a little bored. Next, came a box of mixed raisins and sultanas - - that would make a nice batch of buns for the weekend.

As I put my hand in again, I felt the...could it really be? I grasped it, and pulled it out. Yes, "A brand-new rubber, hot water bottle!" I cried. I had not asked God to send it; I had not truly believed that He could. Ruth was in the front row of the children. She rushed forward, crying out, "If God has sent the bottle, He must have sent the dolly, too!"



Rummaging down to the bottom of the box, she pulled out the small, beautifully dressed dolly. Her eyes shone: She had never doubted! Looking up at me, she asked, "Can I go over with you, Mummy, and give this dolly to that little girl, so she'll know that Jesus really loves her?"



That parcel had been on the way for five whole months, packed up by my former Sunday School class, whose leader had heard and obeyed God's prompting to send a hot water bottle, even to the equator. One of the girls had put in a dolly for an African child -- five months earlier in answer to the believing prayer of a ten-year-old to bring it "That afternoon!" "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." Isaiah 65:24²

As we journey through life, we realize there are times that God does not answer in the way we would wish. Sometimes He answers prayers before we even pray them. But He knows our needs and answers according to His will.

Sometimes when we pray for a person we love, they do not recover from that illness. Sometimes it gets worse – sometimes they die. But God is still present with us during times like that. I love the verse of scripture found in Psalm 116:15, “*Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.*” God keeps watch over us in life – and He is with us during death. Jesus makes all the difference in times like this.



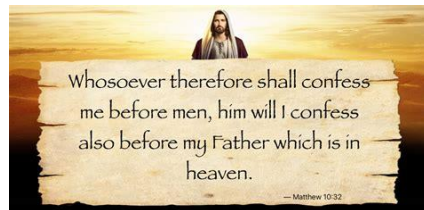
Psalm 23 reminds us of God's presence as we pass through “*the valley of the shadow of death.*” Death is only a shadow; it covers us, but doesn't permanently destroy us.

² [Helen Roseveare a doctor missionary from England to Zaire, Africa, told this as it had happened to her in Africa. She shared it in her testimony on a Wednesday night at Thomas Road Baptist Church.]

Jesus told His followers, *“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you. I go and prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”* (John 14:1-3) The difference in our life when death comes, is the realization that the ones we love, who have confessed Jesus Christ as their Lord, are now present with God. That knowledge brings great comfort and assurance. Jesus makes all the difference.

Our Call to Confession

Our passage of scripture that I read earlier today was this: *“Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him will I also confess before My Father who is in Heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him will I deny before My Father who is in heaven.”* (Matthew 10:32-33)



Today, I want to encourage you to confess Jesus as YOUR Savior. Jesus called people to make a public declaration of their faith. He does not want us to hide it in the closet. He wants us to openly identify ourselves with Him. *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* (I John 1:9) Jesus said *“If we “come to (Him), (He) will by no means cast (us) out.”* (John 6:37)

We have assurance from God’s word, that when we trust Christ, we will be forgiven for our sin, accepted by God, and redeemed by the blood of the Lamb of God, and given an eternal home with God eternally. Why would anyone want to reject that kind of offer from God?

LET US PRAY

Nicene Creed (325 A.D.)

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.
And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten,
begotten of the Father before all ages.
Light of Light; true God of true God; begotten, not made;
of one essence with the Father, by whom all things were made;
who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven,
and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit
and the Virgin Mary, and became man.
And He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate,
and suffered, and was buried.
And the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures;
and ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father;
and He shall come again with glory to judge the living and the
dead;
whose Kingdom shall have no end.
Whose Kingdom shall have no end!