

NOTES ON JESUS' DEITY

NT: Jesus was the Godhead visible to human eyes.

His humanity.

He was born a helpless baby; He grew in wisdom and stature; and He experienced hunger, thirst, weariness, pain and death. He could be both angry and deeply grieved; He could be moved with compassion; He asked questions because He wanted to know the answers, and on occasion frankly admitted that there were limits to His knowledge; and He could feel a natural affinity with particular individuals. It is true that we never hear of Him as laughing, and that the picture we get is of one so deeply conscious of the sins and sorrows of humanity, and so absorbed in doing His Father's will, that He had little time for the lighter side of life. Yet He loved children; He was the friend of publicans and sinners; He prayed that His disciples might share the joy He knew; and it seems unescapable to me that some of the statements He is recorded as having made must have been accompanied by a smile and a flash of humour. And while the title by which He most frequently, as it seems, referred to Himself-Son of Man-may have a Messianic content, I feel sure He intended it also to emphasize His identification with those whose nature He shared.

His miracles.

Miracles so connected with the teaching of Jesus that it is impossible to say that much of Jesus is not supernatural. Miracles of certain types only-compassion or to help people be sure Who Jesus was. Refused for amusement. No destructive miracles or silly ones. Miracles as expected from One who really was divine. [The works that I do show that the Father has sent Me]. He claims the power to be His as well as God's.

His sinlessness.

Followers with whom He lived claim it [1 Peter 2.22 and 1 John 3.5]. He challenged His enemies [John 8.46]. He told His friends [John 14.30] Never expressed any consciousness of being wrong while telling everyone else to ask forgiveness because they were sinners. He told His disciples to pray to be forgiven when they prayed. From time to time He would say He was holy and meek. No self deprecation which is normally seen in those who want to live well. Even His anger was not accompanied with feelings of having overdone it as it is with us. Failure of enemies to bring any moral accusation even at His trial. Consider case of Syro-phoenician woman [Mark 7.25]. He really did have sympathy for the Gentiles-Good Samaritan [Luke 10.29]; Centurion's servant [Matthew 8.5]; Many will come from East and West [Matthew 8.11]; Other sheep [John 10.16] and Go to every creature [Mark 16.15]. His actual words to her were "little dogs, household pets". I think He made the remark about the children's bread and the little dogs with a smile-His intention was to draw out the woman's faith which He then commended and rewarded. Also the cleansing of the Temple. Compare His patience when insulted. The Temple cleansing was similar to His denunciation of other hypocrites. Whip not used

on people, nor were the bird cages overturned. Also cursing of the fig tree. Tree ought to have had the pre-figs that come out with the leaves. It was a demonstration of Israel's show of religion without the good deeds to go with it. Jesus came to serve and to give His life to redeem many. The Father loved Him because He was willing to give up His life, in order that He might receive it back again. Jesus was sinless because He was selfless. Unselfishness is love. God is love.

His character features.

Jesus believed that God loved people but hated sin. Was light. Utter moral purity as well as love. Willing to go to incredible lengths to save people from their sin but Who was the righteous Judge Who could not ignore evil. He was concerned about His disciples being salt and light of secular society. Endorsed the OT prophets' demand for social justice. Helped the poor and weak and social outcasts. Came not to be served but to serve with a basic mission to all who were "lost". He was primarily concerned to change man as man rather than the political regime under which they lived, to transform their attitudes rather than their circumstances, to treat the sickness of their hearts rather than the problem of their environment. His perfect balance of traits or temperament tendencies. He had a perfect balance—a sympathy which is never weak, a strength which is never insensitive, a benevolence which is never indulgent and a drive which is never ruthless. He appeals equally to men and women of every race. They all find Him all they would like to be. Example from Prof. Moule: Jesus' attitude and behaviour towards women. It is difficult enough for anyone, even a consummate master of imaginative writing to create a picture of a deeply pure, good person moving about in an impure environment, without making him a prig or a prude or a sort of "plaster saint". How comes it that, through all the Gospel traditions without exception, there comes a remarkably firmly drawn portrait of an attractive young man moving freely about women of all sorts, including the decidedly disreputable, without a trace of sentimentality, unnaturalness, or prudery, and yet, at every point, maintaining a simple integrity of character? Is this because the environments in which the traditions were preserved and through which they were transmitted were particularly favourable to such a portrait? On the contrary, it seems that they were rather hostile to it.

His deity.

His teaching. The authority [certainty] of the way He spoke about God, man, heaven and Earth. "I say". No saying has become outdated. His daring—He denounced hypocrites and pitied the weak and erring. He demanded high standards in thought and desire as well as in word and act. He ignored the traditions of others [the elders with their ceremonial rather than moral emphasis]. He made Himself the centre—He who loves anyone more than Me, He who loses his life for Me, He who comes to Me [Matthew 10.37 and 11.28] and taught that their eternal destiny depended on their attitude to Him. I am the light of the world [John 8.12]. I am the bread of life [John 6.35]. I am the Way [John 14.6]. Heaven and Earth would pass away but His words would remain

[Mark 13.31]. Yet His actions were perfect-the meekness and humility of Christ [2 Corinthians 10.1].

He said, God was His Father. Only He knew God [Matthew 11.27]. His use of Abba when addressing God. The only Son [John 3]. My Father works, and I work [John 5.17]. He who sees Me sees God [John 14.8]. I am One with God [John 10.30]. Claimed to have existed before Abraham [John 8.52]. It won't do to say these sayings were made up by the disciples. The whole tradition is full of this basic attitude on the part of Jesus, that He had a unique relationship with God. How else do we explain the rage of the Jews, the accusation of blasphemy and attempts to stone Him? Even the Talmud says Jesus claimed to be God.

He claimed what belongs to God-to give life, to accept worship, to forgive sin and to judge the world. I am the Resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me will never die [John 11.25]. Just as the Father is Himself the source of life, in the same way He has made His Son to be the Source of Life [John 5.26]. Eternal life means knowing You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom You sent [John 17.1]. Accepted worship [Matthew 4.10, Matthew 28.9, John 20.28 and Matthew 21.15]. Direct statement in Mark 12 regarding Psalm 110. Persistent use of I AM [the Name of God given to Moses] culminating at His trial where He is condemned for blasphemy-claiming to be equal with God [Mark 14.61]. Lord of the Sabbath [Mark 2.28]. Confession of Peter and of the disciples [Matthew 16.16 and Matthew 14.33]. Right to forgive sins [Mark 2.2, Mark 9.2, Luke 5.20 and Luke 7.48]. He claimed He would judge the world [Mark 8.38, Luke 12.8 and Matthew 7.22]. Nor does the Father judge anyone. He has given His Son the full right to judge [John 5.22]. For the Son of Man is about to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will repay everyone according to his deeds [Matthew 16.27].

C.S. Lewis in Miracles: The historical difficulty of giving for the life, sayings and influence of Jesus any explanation that is not harder than the Christian explanation, is very great. The discrepancy between the depth and sanity and let me add shrewdness of His moral teaching and the rampant megalomania which must lie behind His theological teaching unless He is indeed God, has never been satisfactorily got over. Hence the non Christian hypotheses succeed one another with the restless fertility of bewilderment.

Only Jesus has convinced people that He was God. There is no one else in history like Jesus. His qualities. Calmness and self possession.. His wonderful mind. If God became man we would expect: unusual entrance, sinlessness, do miracles, know He was different, speak greatest words, have lasting influence, satisfy spiritual hunger, have power over death, finest moral teachings. No other has produced all the good things and no rubbish. Authority-dealt with the big issues-relation to God. No new ethical ideas. Instead Jesus calls for repentance, trust and love. Unusual relevance and attractiveness. Teaching about our need for God. Forgiveness, friendship, encouragement. All based on devotion to Himself. He demands and gets it.

Material from Jesus The witness of history. J.N.D. Anderson.