Who is Jesus?

"The Name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous run into it and are safe." – Proverbs 18:10

Introduction: What's In a Name?

Names are not as important to us as they were in the Bible and in many cultures. Names meant a great deal. Who would want to be called Ichabod, Judas, or Lucifer? A name usually described some trait or desired destiny the parents had for their child. Your name may not mean much to you but the name of the Lord is very significant. His name(s) describes his character and nature. To know his name is to know him. His name is like a precious diamond with multiple facets, a diamond has 58-144 facets, but Jesus name has 700+ facets that shine forth the rainbow of his beauty.

1. What Did Jesus Look Like?

Did you ever wonder what Jesus looked like? I do. No one knows for sure because we have never seen him and there are no photographs of paintings. But I like the exhortation from Hebrews to fix our eyes on Jesus. How do we do that if we have never seen him?

"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who 'or the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." **- Hebrews 12:2 NIV**

Certainly the disciples knew, as did everyone who encountered him. One would think that in the natural course of events of the magnitude of Christ and his miracles someone would have had the good sense to draw a portrait of him, or at least leave us a clear description of him. Thousands saw him at the crucifixion in Jerusalem fulfilling the Prophecy of Isaiah and Zechariah.

"He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. <u>He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him</u>, <u>nothing in his appearance that we should desire him</u>. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not." **– Isaiah 53:2-3**

Zechariah 12:10 ***"...they shall <u>look upon me whom they pierced</u>, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn."***

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and <u>we behold his glory</u>, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth." **(John 1:14)**

In fact there are at least two such references to depictions of Jesus by his contemporary that are

known to us. Both are considered apocryphal, that is fiction, but still much of the early church believed them to be factual and there is some historical evidence that an image of Jesus face as drawn by an artist circulated in the early church.

Early 1st Century Description of Jesus

The first description of what Jesus looked like is from an often quoted letter allegedly written by Publius Lentulus, a Roman Consul during the reign of Caesar Augustus (63 BC-14 AD), and Governor of Judea before Pontius Pilate, to the Roman Senate. (Indeed, the Deeds of the Divine Augustus list a Publius Lentulus as being elected as a Roman Consul during Augustus' reign.)

The Letter Describing Jesus

"Lentulus, the Governor of the Jerusalemites to the Roman Senate and People, greetings. There has appeared in our times, and there still lives, a man of great power (virtue), called Jesus Christ. The people call him prophet of truth; his disciples, son of God. He raises the dead, and heals infirmities. He is a man of medium size and handsome; he has a venerable aspect, and his beholders can both fear and love him. His hair is of the color of the ripe hazelnut, straight down to the ears, but below the ears wavy and curled, with a bluish and bright reflection, flowing over his shoulders. It is parted in two on the top of the head, after the pattern of the Nazarenes. His brow is smooth and very cheerful with a face without wrinkle or spot, embellished by a slightly reddish complexion. His nose and mouth are faultless. His beard is abundant, of the color of his hair, not long, but divided at the chin. His aspect is simple and mature; his eyes are changeable and bright. He is terrible in his reprimands, sweet and amiable in his admonitions, cheerful without loss of gravity. He was never known to laugh, but often to weep. His stature is straight, his hands and arms beautiful to behold. His conversation is grave, infrequent, and modest. He is the most beautiful among the children of men."

The Second Description of Jesus

The second reference to the physical description of Jesus is a record of Eusebius, an early church historian who had first had accounts of these matters.

Abgar was, according to tradition, one of the first Christian kings in history, having been converted to the faith by the Apostle Addai (Thaddeus) of Edessa, one of the Seventy-two Disciples. (Matthew 10:3, Mark 3:18)

The oral tradition alleges that Abgar, afflicted with an incurable sickness, probably leprosy, had heard the fame of the power and miracles of Jesus and wrote to him, acknowledging his divinity, craving his help, and offering him asylum in his own residence. The tradition states that Jesus dictated a letter, commending Abgar on his faith, but declining to go, but promising that after his ascension, he would send one of his disciples, endowed with his power –which indeed did happen. After the resurrection and ascension Thaddeus (also called Addai), one of the seventy-two disciples was sent to Edessa by was sent by Thomas the Apostle. In addition to the letter

from Jesus was a drawing of Jesus made by the secretary of Adgar who had transcribed Jesus' dictated letter. The letter and picture of Jesus was often referred to in early historical documents that it was kept at Edessa. It is purported that the image and letter turned up during the siege of the city of Edessa by the Persians in 544 AD.

The text of the letter varies from translation to translation passed down through the ages. Here is variant copy, transcribed from the Doctrina Addaei, and printed in the Catholic Encyclopedia 1908, with current expressions updated:

"Abgar Ouchama to Jesus, the Good Physician who has appeared in the country of Jerusalem, greeting: I have heard of you, and of your healing (power); that you do not use medicines or roots, but by your word you open the eyes of the blind, make the lame to walk, cleanse lepers, and make the deaf to hear; how by your word you heal (the sick), spirits and those who are tormented with lunatic demons, and how, again, you even raise the dead to life. And, learning the wonders that you do, it was borne in upon me that it is because of one of two things): either you have come down from heaven, or else you are the Son of God, who brings all these things to pass. Wherefore I write to you, and pray that you will come to me, one who adores you, and heal all the ills that I suffer; according to the faith I have in you. I also learned that the Jews murmur against you, and persecute you, that they seek to crucify you, and to destroy you. I possess but one small city, but it is beautiful, and large enough for us two to live in peace."

The legend then continues:

When Jesus had received the letter, in the house of the high priest of the Jews, He said to Hannan, the secretary, *"Go, and say to your master; who has sent you to Me: Happy you are because you have believed in Me, not having seen Me, for it is written of Me that 'those who shall see Me shall not believe in Me, and that those who shall not see Me shall believe in Me.' As to that which you have written, that I should come to you, (behold) all that for which I was sent here below is finished, and I ascend again to My Father who sent Me, and when I shall have ascended to Him I will send you one of My disciples, who will heal all your sufferings, and shall give (you) health again, and will convert all who are with you unto life eternal. And your city shall be blessed forever; and the enemy shall never overcome it."*

The Shroud of Turin also maintains precisely to the description of Jesus passed on in the Letter of Lentulus and those image of him circulating in the early church.

Recent Attempts at Painting Jesus

I suppose there is no end to people's need to see a physical representation of Jesus. Most of us are familiar with the 20th Century painting of Jesus called the Sallman Head. It is a **1940 portrait of Jesus of Nazareth by Warner Sallman**. It has been reproduced a half billion times by the end of the 20th Century. I remember a large picture hanging in my grandmother's dining room. As a little boy I thought that was the real picture of Jesus.

Most recently circulated is a painting titled, *Prince of Peace*, by Akiane Kramarik who painted the picture as a young Lithuanian girl based on visions of Jesus and heaven.

Others have drawn and painted the laughing Jesus and Jesus with a crown of thorns. But none of them is the real Jesus, not even the alleged first century description and/or drawings.

2. Who is Jesus?

The bible tells us clearly who he is.

- Matthew 1:23 *"Emmanuel, God with us."*
- John 1:1-3 *"Word was with God and was God."*
- Hebrews 1:1-3 *"Exact image of God."*
- Colossians 1:15 *"Is the image of the invisible God."*
- Philippians 2:5-11 *"Name above every name."*
- Revelation 1:8 *"The Almighty."*
- Revelation 1:12-18 *"Alpha and Omega, beginning and ending, first and last*."

Who is this Jesus according to Scriptures?

It was I who...framed the heavens and the earth by my word
It was I who...hovered over a desolate lifeless earth
It was I who...made the skins to cover Adam and Eve
It was I who...cursed the serpent who tempted them
It was I who...It was I who put the rainbow in the clouds
It was I who...called Abraham
It was I who...spared Isaac's life on the altar of sacrifice
It was I who...who wrestled with Jacob and changed his name
It was I who...spoke to Moses out of the burning bush
It was I who...dried up the Red Sea for the people of Israel to cross
It was I who...sent manna from heaven. I am that manna .
It was I who...gave water from the rock. I was that rock.
It was I who...who sent quail for my people to eat
It was I who...was the cloud by day and fire by night
It was I who...descended on Mt Sinai and wrote the commandments
It was I who...caused the sun to stand still
It was I who...made the sun go back ten degrees
It was I who...tore down the walls of Jericho
It was I who...strengthened Samson
It was I who...performed the miracles for Elijah and Elisha

It was I who...ordered ravens to feed Elijah
It was I who...whispered to a fish to swallow Jonah
It was I who...who guided the stone to kill Goliath
It was I who...shut the mouth of the lions for Daniel
It was I who...who walked in the furnace with three Hebrew boys
It was I who...who Isaiah saw high and lifted up upon my throne

It was I, the Lord strong and mighty, the first and the last, the beginning and the ending, the Alpha and Omega, the Almighty, because I Am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who came in flesh and blood, the Emmanuel, God with you, the Savior of the world. I alone am the King of kings, and Lord of lords, the Holder of the keys of death and hell, the Great Physician, your Provider, your Protector, the Lion of Judah, the Changeless One, your Ransom, Redeemer, your Rewarder and Inheritance. I am your Strength when you are weak, the Author and Finisher of your faith, the Faithful One, the Ancient of Days, the Anchor of your soul, and underneath you are my Everlasting Arms.

And I am coming again in clouds of glory with ten thousands of saints, with power and great glory, and every eye will see me, and every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that I am Lord to the glory of God the Father. I will judge the nations, redeem Israel, destroy the workers of iniquity, and I will lay hold of Satan, that old dragon the serpent called the devil, and I will bind him for a thousand years, and then cast him alive into the lake of everlasting fire. For I am the LORD!

3. Why Call on His Name?

- Acts 4:12 *"No other name by which we can be saved."*
- Romans 10:9-10 *"Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*
- Philippians 2:12 *"every knee will bow and confess Jesus is Lord."*
- Psalm 44:5 *"Through your name we will tread down the enemy."*

We <u>believe on</u> his name, <u>praise</u> his name, <u>give thanks</u> to his name, <u>call upon</u> his name, <u>sing praises</u> to his name, <u>rejoice</u> in his name, <u>confess</u> his name before men, <u>pray</u> in his name, <u>bless</u> the name of the Lord, <u>lift our hands</u> in his name, <u>bless others</u> in his name, <u>walk up and down</u> in his name, <u>proclaim</u> his name, <u>fear</u> his name, <u>think</u> on his name, <u>exalt</u> his name, <u>speak</u> in his name, <u>prophesy</u> in his name, <u>have faith</u> in his name, <u>cast out devils</u> in his name, <u>heal</u> in his name, <u>pray</u> in his name, and <u>glorify his name forever</u>.

There's Something About That Name

by Bill and Gloria Gaither

Jesus....

The mere mention of His name can calm the storm, heal the broken, raise the dead. At the name of Jesus, I've seen sin hardened men melted, derelicts transformed. The lights of hope put in the eyes of a hopeless child.

At the name of Jesus, hatred and bitterness turn to love and forgiveness, arguments cease. I've heard a mother softly breathe His name at the bedside of a child delirious from fever, and watched... as that little body grew quiet, and fevered brow cooled.

I've sat the side of a dying saint. Her body wracked with pain, who in those final fleeting seconds summoned her last ounce of ebbing strength, just to whisper earth's sweetest name. Jesus...Jesus....

Emperors have tried to destroy it. Philosophies have tried to stamp it out. Tyrannts have tried to wash it from the face of the Earth with the very blood of those who claimed it. Yet it still stands.

And there shall be that final day when every voice that has ever uttered a sound, every voice of Adam's race, shall raise in one mighty chorus to proclaim the name of Jesus.

For in that day, every knee shall bow, every tongue shall confess, that Jesus Christ is truly Lord. You see, it was not by mere chance that caused the angel one night, long ago to say to a virgin maiden: His name,

His name shall be called Jesus....Jesus....Jesus.....
Yes there is something, something about that name.....

Closing song: **Video Worship: I Speak Jesus,*