

About the Lord Jesus Christ

The New Church directs all worship to the Lord Jesus Christ who we believe is God. We pray directly to Jesus Christ rather than addressing Almighty God. But who was or who is - Jesus Christ? This question has been at the centre of debate for centuries with a multitude of opinions on the matter, creating not only confusion but also division within the Church. Today, many people would rather concentrate on being a decent person than get involved in thinking about concepts like the Trinity, or the Virgin Birth or the Resurrection. To them, these things seem remote and irrelevant. And this is a great pity because the desire to understand God is also the desire to understand life.

The New Church believes that Jesus Christ was God, who came and took on a physical existence and experienced human life so that God Himself could fully share in our individual lives. Because of this we can fully identify with Him, and in this way He can better help us in our various experiences as human beings. This extension of God, which did not exist before the birth of Christ, does not divide God in any way, nor separate Him into various persons. God is infinite, and being infinite is to be indivisible and to be fully present everywhere at one and the same time. This is the true nature of God.

When God, entering time and space, came into the world to be a man among men, then this presence - called the incarnation - also helps us with our understanding of Him. Jesus Christ, in every way we can think, is the "window" on God, or, putting it another way, we can now think of God in a visible, down to earth, human picture.

A potential problem for anyone who tries to understand the true nature and identity of Jesus Christ is the frequent accounts in the gospel, of Jesus making reference to His Heavenly Father. These make it appear that He saw Himself as a separate person from God Almighty. Who, for example, was Jesus praying to in the garden of Gethsemane, and on the cross? Yet there were times when Jesus said such things as "I and the Father are one" and "He who has seen Me has seen the Father", which implies very little distinction if any at all. The only way to resolve this apparent contradiction is to understand that the level of awareness Jesus had of His own Divinity ever present but deeply seated - varied over time.

The New Church believes that in Jesus Christ, the soul - that deepest, inmost part of a person that is beyond conscious awareness was completely Divine and not human. In becoming human, God clothed His soul with flesh, not only physical flesh and blood but also a human level of consciousness which at times could not help but feel its own frailty. Through this human level also came hereditary weaknesses or "sinfulness". Jesus received this through His mother, the woman Mary. So in order to create a man with full divinity and yet also full humanity, the virgin birth was an essential step in this unique creation of the man Jesus Christ.

Jesus, then, was able to be fully tempted or "tested" by the lower, self - regarding urges and desires of life. For the most part He felt very human. He had to respond to this human level at times undoubtedly feeling, as the gospels indicate, very alone and with little or no sense of the presence of the Divine. It was through this human level that the powers of evil attacked Him by flooding his mind with alluring false ideas and attractive evil desires.

In this way they hoped to destroy the mission for which He had come into the world. As Jesus successfully resisted these attacks, His own humanity was gradually transformed or "glorified" into a Divine nature. The climax of this process came with His apparently futile death on the cross. In so giving His life for the human race Jesus Christ has redeemed mankind by securing our spiritual freedom to choose good or evil - something which at that time was in imminent danger of being lost forever and which is the one essential for the continuance of God's love for us.

In our ongoing relationship with Him as Lord and Master we are individually able to be "saved". This means frequently being taken out of self centred states of fear and negativity. Our individual relationship with Jesus means that we always look towards a higher centre than ourselves. In our lives this is the essential ingredient that links us with our Heavenly Father who both completely loves and fully understands us.