

A Refresher Course on the Bible


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The Bible

- A lens – the best lens with which we know, see, and serve God
- Written across the ages – books and styles - From Faith for Faith
- We believe in God – we believe the Bible
- The Word of God – thanks be to God
- Not a rulebook – seeks to nurture WISDOM
- Questions – Bible as CANON; does it help or harm?



The Bible shows
us Jesus - and all
that!

How do we talk about
Jesus in one class?

JESUS - PCUSA Ordination Questions –

- Do you trust in Jesus Christ your savior, acknowledge him Lord of all and Head of the Church, and through him believe in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?
- Will you fulfil your ministry in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture, and be continually guided by our confessions?
- Will you in your own life seek to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, love your neighbors, and work for the reconciliation of the world?
- Will you be a faithful (Minister, Elder, Deacon), proclaiming the good news in Word and sacrament, teaching faith and caring for people? Will you be active in government and discipline, serving in the councils of the church, and in your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?

Jesus – and all that!

Who was Jesus?

Who is Jesus?

The Person of history

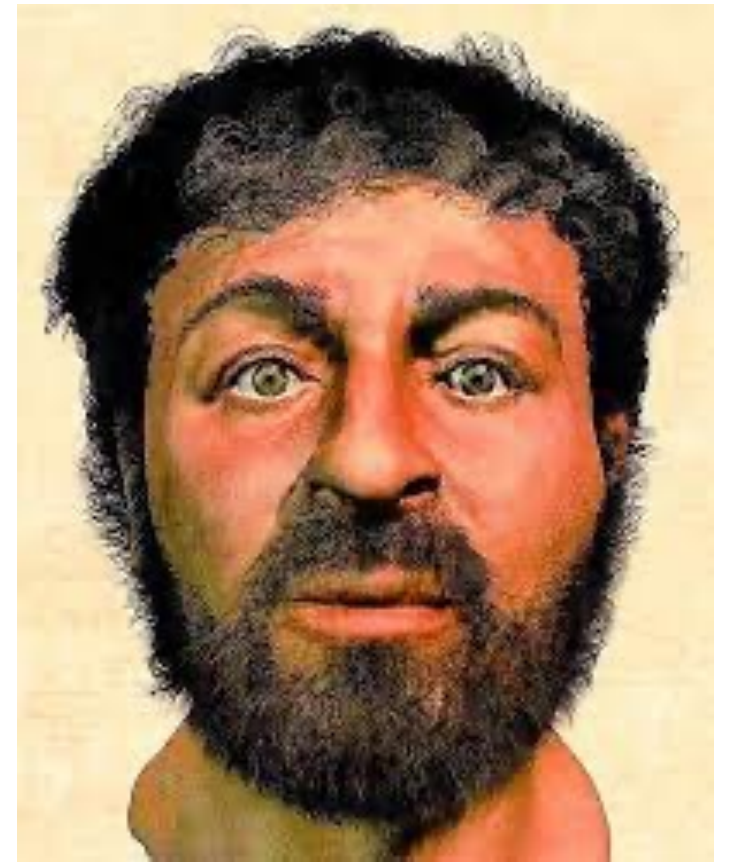
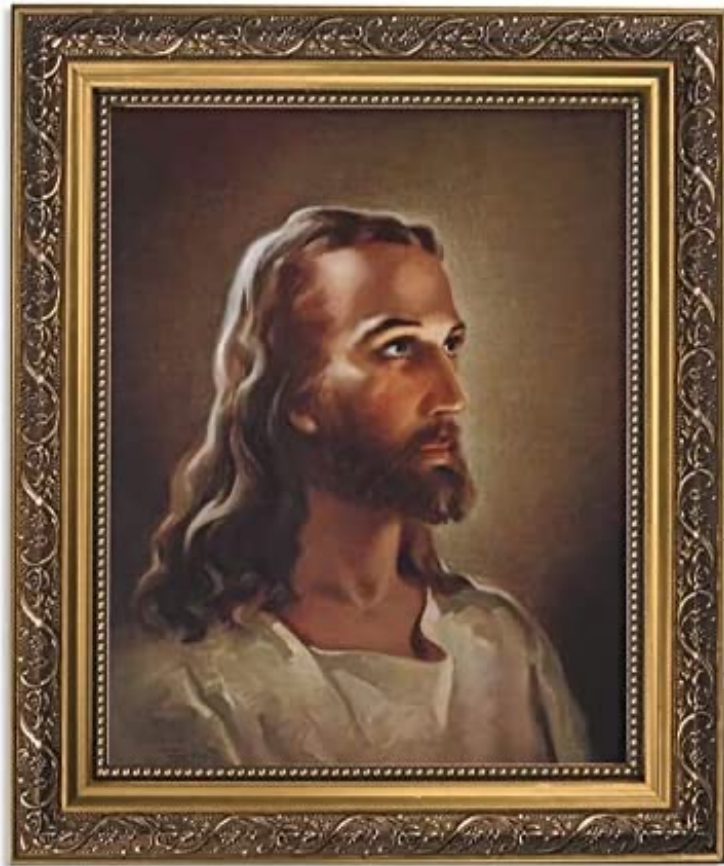
The Person of Faith

The Person for you

The Centrality of Jesus

- A defining characteristic of Christianity – we discover the revelation of God PRIMARILY in a Person – Jesus.
- This is unique among the major religions of the world.
- “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” – John 1
- Jesus is what can be seen of God embodied in a human life.
- Hence – Jesus is more central than the Bible
- God, the Bible, and Jesus – interwoven – the heart of Christian vision of life.

Images of Jesus



Who Was Jesus?

Marcus Borg describes the man Jesus as follows -

- a 1st century human figure of Galilee, a Jew from Nazareth
- a charismatic leader
- a sage
- a prophet
- a man living in the power of the spirit
- a first century peasant healer
- a man dedicated to radical social change.

Jesus – the man – pre-Easter – of history

- "he WAS a spirit person, subversive sage, social prophet, and movement founder who invited his followers and hearers into a transforming relationship with the same Spirit that he himself knew, and into a community whose social vision was shaped by the core value of compassion" - (Borg)
- We have a fair amount of material produced by Jesus' avowed followers, and very little produced by anyone else.
- What we know mostly comes from the gospel stories – written and sustained “from faith for faith.”

What did Jesus Do and Say -

- Announced that in him the Kingdom of God was at hand
- Healed the sick and chased away demons
- Called disciples to “follow”
- Taught in sayings and parables about the way of faith and life
- Embodied a deep connection to God
- Showed love, kindness, forgiveness, grace, peace, patience
- Was persecuted, arrested, and killed on a cross
- Raised from the dead – keeps calling us to trust and follow

Jesus – the Christ, the Messiah – post-Easter

Jesus – “he saves us” from our sins

Emmanuel – “God with us”

Word of God, Lamb of God, Light of the World, Bread of Life, Alpha and Omega, the first and the last and the living one

Jewish mystic, spirit-person, healer, and social prophet becomes Messiah, Savior, Lord

“Who was Jesus” gets merged with “who is Jesus”

Christians find in Jesus the decisive REVELATION of God – for Christians, God is best defined in Jesus Christ

Who IS Jesus for you and me – us?

We recognize in Jesus ONE worthy of our allegiance, devotion, and discipleship and we seek to follow

We get on a journey seeking to live in obedience, knowing, loving, and serving Jesus

We strive to learn what it means to follow him and work, as he did, for the reconciliation of the world

We seek to spend a lifetime – including doubts, setbacks, and successes - trusting and serving Jesus

We intend to worship, grow in faith, share life in community, and promote Jesus' love and justice always

Jesus -

- Frederick Buechner reminds us, “in the last analysis, you cannot pontificate but only point. A Christian is one who points at Christ and says, ‘I cannot prove a thing, but there is something about his eyes and his voice. There is something about the way he carries his head, the way he carries his cross – the way he carries me.’”
(Wishful Thinking, p. 32)

From the Iona Community

- **Therefore, though we are sometimes fearful and full of doubt, in God we trust; and, in the name of Jesus Christ, we commit ourselves, in the service of others, to seek justice and to live in peace, to care for the earth and to share the commonwealth of God's goodness, to live in the freedom of forgiveness and the power of the Spirit of love, and in the company of the faithful so to be the church, for the glory of God. Amen.**

Questions to ponder

- What else to discuss? What have we missed?
- What would Jesus have us to do? GADL – “go and do likewise”

Resources – so many

- Marcus Borg – The Heart of Christianity
- Marcus Borg & N.T. Wright - The Meaning of Jesus – two visions
- N.T. Wright – The Challenge of Jesus – Rediscovering who Jesus was and is & Simply Christian
- Eugene Peterson – Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places & The Jesus Way
- Brian McLaren – The Secret Message of Jesus & Do I Stay Christian – a guide for doubters, the disappointed, and the disillusioned
- Will Willimon – Why Jesus?
- George Stroup – Why Jesus Matters