

JESUS CHRIST - HIS MORAL EXCELLENCE PART 1

JESUS' MORAL EXCELLENCE AS REVEALED IN THE GOSPELS

**Scripture Quotations are from the
New American Standard Bible 1995**

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Jesus Christ – His Moral Excellence

What about Jesus Christ?

Arthur James Balfour was a former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. He lived from 1840 to 1930. When he was Foreign Secretary of England he issued the Balfour Declaration pledging British support for a Jewish national home in Palestine. He devoted himself to the cause of international peace. Once, he addressed the students at the University of Edinburgh on the topic of "Moral value which unites nations." He said that common knowledge, commerce, diplomatic relations, friendship and understanding are things which bind nations in oneness.

At the conclusion of his address, a Japanese student asked the following question:

"But, Mr. Balfour, what about Jesus Christ?"

The audience waited in silence for the Prime Minister's reply. But he didn't answer.

Mr. Balfour's embarrassed silence emphasizes the bankruptcy of humanistic formulas to attaining the unity of humanity, and it betrayed Balfour's denial of what is true moral value.

The portrait of Jesus in the scriptures argues effectively that He is not invented.

The enemies of Christ and the gospel have argued that Jesus was an invented character. However, the testimony of scripture provides convincing evidence that He was not invented. W. G. Morehead, in his book entitled *The fundamentals*, said concerning the Moral Glory of Christ,

"His moral glory consists of the perfections which marked his earthly life and ministry; perfections which attached to every relation he sustained, and to every circumstance in which he was found." The proposition is, "The moral glory of Jesus Christ as set forth in the four gospels cannot be the product of the unaided human intellect, that only the Spirit of God is competent to execute this matchless portrait of the Son of Man." (W. G. Morehead, *The Fundamentals*, vol. iii, p 42).

Matthew tells how Jesus is over and above distance and sickness

Matthew 8:5 And when Jesus entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, imploring Him, 6 and saying, "Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, fearfully tormented." 7 Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him." 8 But the centurion said, "Lord, I am not worthy for You to come under my roof, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed. 9 "For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it."

After Jesus had seen and remarked concerning the centurion's faith he said,

Matthew 8:13 And Jesus said to the centurion, "Go; it shall be done for you as you have believed." And the servant was healed that very moment.

- Jesus merely spoke and the centurion's servant was healed.

In a way similar to His mastery of sickness Jesus is above all the things to which humans are subject.

This article deals with what is true moral value: the moral excellence of Jesus Christ.

Points to examine:

- His relation to sin
- His relation to law

Jesus – and temptation

Satan's temptation of Jesus is recorded in the gospel of Matthew, chapter 4,

Matthew 4:1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. 3 And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." 4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.' " 5 Then the devil took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, 6 and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, 'HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU'; and

'ON their HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP,

SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.' "

7 Jesus said to him, "On the other hand, it is written, 'YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.' "

8 Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory;

9 and he said to Him, "All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me."

10 Then Jesus said to him, "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.' "

11 Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and began to minister to Him.

- When Jesus was weak from hunger the devil tempted Him to use His power to make bread of stone. In this way Jesus would yield to the demands of His flesh, but Jesus answered that man lives "on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." This answer stands in contrast with the temptation of Adam and Eve. Adam listened to the words of his wife, and she listened to the words of Satan.
- The devil tempted Him again by telling Him to test God's willingness to protect Him; that is, accept a dare. This is similar to people testing God by placing limits on the time He has to respond, or setting limits on the way He can respond.
- The devil again tempted Jesus by offering Him worldly power and pleasure.
- Jesus refused all the devil's temptations.
- Jesus relied upon what is written in the scriptures.

Jesus was tempted in all points as others, but while condemning all sin, He committed no sin. John 8:24, 44, John 8:46.

The writer of the book of Hebrews said,

Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are, yet* without sin.

John, in his gospel, wrote,

John 8:24 -- I said therefore to you, that you shall die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am he, you shall die in your sins.

Jesus challenged anyone to point to a sin in His life.

John 8:46 -- Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe me?

One of the most prominent characteristics of mankind is that they can be tempted to sin. While Satan tried to tempt Jesus he did not succeed.

Jesus – and His relation to sin

Biblical definition of sin

What is sin? Sin is:

Transgression of law –

1 John 3:4 - "Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness."

Sin is lawlessness

Failure to do –

James 4:17 -- "Therefore to one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin."

Sin is a failure to do something when one knows that good morality requires it.

And the Bible supplies numerous examples of people who fell into sin.

Examples: Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit; Cain murdered his brother, Abel; the people of antediluvian world rejected God - "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. (Genesis 6:5); Sodom and Gomorrah whose citizens live ungodly lives; the Children of Israel in the wilderness rebelled against God; the idolatries of the Canaanites led to their defeat by Israel, etc.

The Bible says that "...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23.

In the Old Testament book of Judges the Bible says of the Israelites,

Judges 21:25 In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.¹

The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament says of the phrase "...right in his own eyes",

The phrase "in your eyes" is equivalent to opinion or judgment. In Judges each man did what was right in his own eyes (21:25);[i.e., he did what was right in his own opinion.]

Proverbs says, the fool is right in his own eyes (Prov 12:15).²

Paul believed that there was divine law and that it told him what sin was. He wrote to the Romans,

Romans 7:7 What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, "You shall not covet."

- The Law in a sense defined sin.

Many times the word used by the Bible for sin is the Greek word, *hamartia* (ἁμαρτία.) – which means to miss the mark. Also, *hamartēma* (ἁμάρτημα), denotes an act of disobedience to divine law.

Significantly, Jesus never confessed sin.

On one occasion He said,

John 8:46 -- Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe me?

Jesus committed no sin.

The regard of Jesus' innocence by people is consistent.

1. Pilate's question to the mob when they demanded that Jesus be crucified was this: "Why, what evil has this man done? I have found no guilt in him demanding death." (Luke 23:22)
2. One of the men crucified with Jesus said, "... We are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." (Luke 23:41)
3. The centurion at the cross said: "Certainly, this man was innocent."
4. The Apostle Peter wrote,

1 Peter 2:21 For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, 22 WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; 23 and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously;

- If one reads the gospels and closely observes the behavior of Jesus the scriptures reveal that He never commits sin.
- He shows no moral faults.
- All the apostles show their human failures, and faults. Jesus never does.
- Jesus is without sin.

¹ New American Standard Bible: 1995 update (Jdg 21:25). (1995). The Lockman Foundation.

² Schultz, C. (1999). [1612 ῥῥ](#). In R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer Jr., & B. K. Waltke (Eds.), *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (electronic ed., p. 663). Moody Press.

Jesus forgave sin.

He was merciful to the woman taken in adultery.

Under the Law of Moses another citizen brought the accusation of wrongdoing against a violator. In an incident cited by John, the villagers had discovered a woman in the act of adultery. The Law of Moses commanded such behavior to be punished by stoning to death. The accusers tested Jesus to see if He would impose the rigid rules of the Law of Moses on the woman. But Jesus replied to her accusers, “He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.” None of her accusers qualified. Jesus asked the woman, “Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?” And she said, “No one, Lord.” and Jesus said, **“Neither do I condemn you; go your way; from now on sin no more.”** (John 8:10-11).³

The healing of the paralytic Jesus forgave the man’s sins.

On another occasion Jesus forgave the sins of a man paralyzed, as Mark wrote in 2:1-12.

Mark 2:1 When He had come back to Capernaum several days afterward, it was heard that He was at home. 2 And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room, not even near the door; and He was speaking the word to them. 3 And they came, bringing to Him a paralytic, carried by four men. 4 Being unable to get to Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Him; and when they had dug an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic was lying. 5 And Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic, **“Son, your sins are forgiven.”** 6 But some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, 7 “Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; **who can forgive sins but God alone?**” 8 Immediately Jesus, aware in His spirit that they were reasoning that way within themselves, said to them, “Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts? 9 “Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven’; or to say, ‘Get up, and pick up your pallet and walk’? 10 “But so that you may know that **the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins**”—He said to the paralytic, 11 “I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet and go home.” 12 And he got up and immediately picked up the pallet and went out in the sight of everyone, so that they were all amazed and were glorifying God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this.”⁴

- He forgave sins and worked a miracle to establish his claim.

Jesus gave Himself for sin.

He gave himself for the sins of others, shedding His blood to the end that their sins might be remitted.

Matt. 16:21 From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, **and be killed**, and be raised up on the third day. 22 Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You.” 23 But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.” 24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.

³ Emphasis mine, author.

⁴ Emphasis mine, Author.

- Jesus knew his enemies would put Him to death.
- Discipleship Is Costly

Jesus made some extraordinary statements about His purpose in life:

Matt. 20:28 -- ... Just as the son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to **give his life a ransom** for many.

Matt. 26:28 -- ... For this is **my blood** of the covenant, which is to be **shed** on behalf of many **for forgiveness of sins**.

John 6:51 -- **I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he shall live forever**; and the bread also which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh.

John 10:15, 17 -- even as the father knows me and I know the father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. ... For this reason the father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again.

John 12:32-33 -- "and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." but he was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which he was to die.

Who is this to sustain such a relation to sin?

Jesus died for our sins...

1 Corinthians 15:3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...

Paul's teaching about the purpose and work of Jesus is consistent with what Jesus said.

- Jesus died for OUR SINS. He did not die for His sins because He had none.
- The gospel tells the same story.

Galatians 1:3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ⁵ to whom be the glory forevermore. Amen.

He gave Himself for OUR SINS:

- To rescue us from the present evil age.
- According to the will of God

Jesus bore our sins on the cross...

¹ Peter 2:21 For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, ²² who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; ²³ and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; ²⁴ and **He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross**, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

- He bore OUR SINS.

- He suffered in the flesh and went to the cross so that we might through His suffering die to sin and live to righteousness.
- This is substitutionary sacrifice.
- By His wounds we are healed.

What Jesus thought of self-righteousness

Luke 18:9-14 "And he also told this parable to certain ones who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: 'Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee, and the other a tax-gatherer. 'The Pharisee stood and was praying thus to himself, "God, I thank thee that I am not like other people, swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax-gatherer. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get." 'But the tax-gatherer, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, "God, be merciful to me, the sinner!" 'I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for **everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, but he who humbles himself shall be exalted.**"⁵

- this is what Jesus thought of self-righteousness.

Jesus never confessed sin, but He disapproved of self-righteousness.

Matthew 23:1 Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to His disciples, 2 saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; 3 therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things and do not do them. 4 "They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger. 5 "But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels of their garments. 6 "They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues, 7 and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called Rabbi by men. 8 "But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. 9 "Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. 10 "Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ. 11 "But the greatest among you shall be your servant. 12 "Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted. 13 "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.

- Jesus taught that self-righteous behavior was to be avoided.
- Jesus condemned hypocrisy.
- He also taught that humility, and consciousness of one's own sin, is commendable.

A remark Jesus made to His disciples:

Matthew 7:11 "**If you then, being evil**, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!

- Jesus did not include Himself in His evaluation of His disciples.

⁵ Bold highlighting of scripture in all cases is mine to emphasize certain textual references. Author.

- By saying they were “evil” He meant, mischief making, delighting in injury, doing evil to others, dangerous or destructive.⁶

Jesus – His relation to law

Jesus’ relation to sin suggests His relation to law.

- Jesus contrasted himself with all other moral teachers,
 - “I say unto you,”
 - “These sayings of mine,” etc. Matthew 5 - 7.
- Other teachers always refer to another for authority.
 - The rabbis referred to Moses, or to the halakhah.
 - Religious leaders refer to “the church,” “the council” or to the founder of the religion.

His relation to law

1. Such a relation that Jesus has to sin suggests at once a relation to the law of which sin is a violation.
2. Jesus contrasted himself with all other moral teachers. Jesus declared His authority to speak and teach morality. He said, “I say unto you,” “these sayings of mine,” etc. Matthew 5 - 7.

Jesus was once confronted by the Jews over this issue.

Mark 11:27 They came again to Jerusalem. And as He was walking in the temple, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders came to Him, 28 and began saying to Him, “By what authority are You doing these things, or who gave You this authority to do these things?” Jesus then asked them about the baptism of John—was it from God or from men.

- The result was that he did not tell them where He got His authority.
- He made it clear that He did not report to them.

Jesus fulfilled the Law.

Matthew 5:17 Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; **I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.** For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished.

The word “accomplished” in this context means: to fulfil, as in, to give the true or complete meaning to something—‘to give the true meaning to, to provide the real significance of.’ Or, it may be interpreted, ‘I did not come to destroy but to give true meaning to’ Mt 5:17⁷

W. E. Vine gives the definition as follows:

⁶ George Ricker Berry, *A Dictionary of New Testament Greek Synonyms*, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, 1979, πονηρός, evil. p. 22.

⁷ Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 404). New York: United Bible Societies. 33.144 πληρώω.

“fulfill” – πληρόω : to give the true or complete meaning to something—‘to give the true meaning to, to provide the real significance of.’ ‘I did not come to destroy but to give true meaning to’ Mt 5:17; ‘for the whole Law has its true meaning in one expression, Love your neighbor as yourself’ Gal. 5:14. In speaking of ‘true meaning,’ it may be useful in some languages to use a phrase meaning ‘real intent’ or ‘real purpose.’⁸

Strong’s says of “fulfill” - 2c3 to fulfil, i.e. to cause God’s will (as made known in the law) to be obeyed as it should be, and God’s promises (given through the prophets) to receive fulfilment.⁹

- How could any mere man have made such a statement with realistic intent: “I did not come to abolish but to fulfill?”
- Could anyone else make such a statement in the first person?

He openly declared Himself to be Lord.

Matthew 7:22 -- “Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name cast out demons, and in your name perform many miracles?'”

Who is “the Lord”? Strong’s lexicon says,

The Lord is:

- he to whom a person or thing belongs, about which he has power of deciding; master, lord.
 - the possessor and disposer of a thing.
 - the owner; one who has control of the person, the master.
 - in the state: the sovereign, prince, chief, the Roman emperor.
 - it is also a title of honour expressive of respect and reverence, with which servants salute their master.
 - this title is given to: God, the Messiah.¹⁰
- In this passage Jesus describes himself as the one to whom everyone reports – for judgment!

He said He was Lord of the Sabbath, and greater than the temple, Lord of the Sabbath,

Matthew 12:8 -- “For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.”

The Jews thought that observing the Sabbath was the foremost of their duties. But Jesus pointed out to them that duty in the temple was greater than the Sabbath observance.

Then He told them,

Matthew 12:6 -- “but I say to you, that something greater than the temple is here.

- He taught that He was master of the Sabbath.

⁸ Ibid., Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996).

⁹ Strong, J. (1995). *Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon*. Woodside Bible Fellowship.

¹⁰ Strong, J. (1995). *Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon*. Woodside Bible Fellowship. κύριος [kurios /koo·ree·os/] The Lord is: 1 he to whom a person or thing belongs, about which he has power of deciding; master, lord. 1A the possessor and disposer of a thing. 1A1 the owner; one who has control of the person, the master. 1A2 in the state: the sovereign, prince, chief, the Roman emperor. 1B is a title of honour expressive of respect and reverence, with which servants salute their master. 1C this title is given to: God, the Messiah.

- The Sabbath was not master of him.
- He said that He was greater than the temple.

He is to be Judge of all.

John 12:48 "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My sayings has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day. For I did not speak on my own initiative, but the Father himself who sent me has given me commandment, what to say, and what to speak."

Matthew 25:31-46 -- (this is the judgment scene in which sheep and goats are separated, etc.)

Conclusion

The conclusion we draw from the portrait of Jesus drawn by the Scriptures is that there is no other prophet or teacher in history who is shown as having such a relationship to sin and law.

He is unique.

He must be placed in a special category.

Since Jesus is to be judge of all it behoves everyone to submit to His lordship and His teaching.

Review

1. Sin is _____ of the law.
2. Jesus never confessed _____, but He disapproved of _____.
3. Jesus told the paralytic, "Son, your _____ are _____.
4. Jesus said he came to give His life as a _____ for many.
5. Jesus bore our _____ in his body on the _____.
6. Jesus did not commit _____.
7. Jesus fulfilled the _____.
8. Jesus declared Himself to be _____.
9. Jesus said that He is _____ of the _____.
10. Jesus said, "He who _____ Me and does not _____ My sayings has one who _____ him."
11. The portrait drawn of Jesus in the Bible proves that He is not an _____ character.