



Topic: What is so radical about Jesus?

Enquiry question – What is so radical about Jesus?

Jesus. In this unit we will look at how Jesus treated society's least lovable people and the challenge this offers to Christians today. Jesus is seen to be radical in these stories because he publicly argues with authority. By his actions Jesus exemplifies what it is to live in accordance with God's will, providing a role model for Christians. Jesus doesn't just want to help people he meets, he wants to make the world a fairer and more just place, whether he is there to help individuals or not. This requires changes to what people think, to custom and tradition. His challenge is particularly focused on the powerful, on the side of the powerless. In this sense Jesus is radical.

I need to know:

- To consider whether Jesus was radical in his behaviour & how Christians may follow his example in daily life.
- To explain how Christians respond to the teaching and example of Jesus.
- To examine the 'Nazareth Manifesto' to evaluate Jesus' role within messianic prophecy.
- To explain the impact of Jesus' teachings on the treatment of the marginalised today.

Jesus the Rabbi

Jesus was a teacher, speaking on moral issues and ideas. His main message is of repentance and forgiveness, rooted in a central message of love. Much of Jesus' work involved healing the sick, some of whom had given up hope of being healed. However, at the time of Jesus, the Jewish people lived under Roman occupation. Some of Jesus' teachings conflicted with the practices of religious authorities at the time, making him a figure of controversy.

Key Words and Definitions



- **Agape:** A Greek word meaning 'love'; refers to Jesus' sacrificial & generous love for others.
- **Blasphemy:** speaking against God.
- **Gospels:** The word 'gospel' means good news. The term is also used to describe first four books of the Bible (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) where we read about the life of Jesus.
- **Messiah:** 'the anointed one'; a rescuer.
- **Parable:** a story with a hidden meaning.
- **Pharisee:** name means 'separated ones' – they had great religious authority, especially concerned with keeping religious laws.
- **Prophecy:** messages from God that sometimes gave a prediction about the future.
- **Rabbi:** religious (Jewish) teacher.
- **Resurrection:** when someone who is declared dead suddenly returns to life.
- **Salvation:** being saved from sin.
- **Sin:** disobedience of the law of God.

The Fall & salvation



The book of Genesis – the first book in the Bible – opens with God's creation and gift of a perfect world to humans. However, humanity (Adam & Eve) disobey and betray God's trust. As a consequence, they must leave God's perfect garden, bringing sin and suffering into the world. Christians believe that Jesus is 'good news', not only exemplifying how to live in accordance with God's will, but also by making the ultimate sacrifice (through his crucifixion) leading to salvation to all who turn to him.

Common misconceptions about Jesus

Although Jesus is the most painted figure in the world, there are no records anywhere in the New Testament that describe what he actually looked like, only the sort of person he was. This leads some people to doubt if he even existed because most of what we know about him was written by his follower. However, there is historical, and non-Christian evidence that could confirm Jesus was a real person.

Jesus the prophet



Prophets are messengers of God and Christianity has a long history in the Old Testament of prophets bring God's message to people in order to guide them back to living in accordance with God's will. Christians also claim that one Old Testament prophet, Isaiah, predicted the coming of a future messiah or saviour of humankind about 800 years before the Gospels. Jesus certainly brought God's message, but was this as a prophet or as the messiah?

Sinners

The term 'sinners' does not necessarily mean people who are particularly immoral. 'Sinner' is a term used by Jewish rabbis of any ordinary Jews who did not follow their particular observance of the Law; similarly, Pharisees used this term to describe people who did not keep to their interpretations of the Law. People considered 'sinners' often belonged to marginalised groups. However, clearly the term also applies to those who deliberately flouted the Law, including prostitutes and tax collectors. Many of the Gospel stories tell of Jesus keeping the company with people considered 'sinners'.

Agape in action



Jesus taught Christians that they must "love your neighbour as yourself." The love Jesus is referring to in this teaching is *agape* love, the idea of doing actual good for others. Many Christians today demonstrate this through their work with marginalised groups. In this topic we explore the work of:

- Street pastors: these are volunteers who support people in need at night on the streets of towns and cities.
- Elizabeth Fry: a 19th century Quaker who dedicate her life to improving conditions in British prisons.

You may also wish to explore how Christian theology was used to attack the slave trade, linking to your History learning.

https://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/history/slavery_1.shtml