

Was Jesus Christ confrontational?

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GLADEWATER, Texas—Most people today think of Jesus Christ as the sweet baby lying in a makeshift crib in a manger. Or else a half-naked man hanging on a cross. It is helpful to realize that these are not the only manifestations of Christ while He walked the earth as a human being. There is more to His actions than just the helpless image at the beginning of life as a baby or at His end after extreme and hideous torture. Was He controversial, perhaps confrontational?

From Isaiah we read prophecies looking ahead hundreds of years to describe how Jesus would be born and would suffer as a servant. To complete this picture, we should also include the role of "wise man" or "teacher." These were roles that people of Jesus' day were familiar with and understood as they saw Him filling those roles. He taught in the temple many times. He taught and fed the multitudes several times as well. He came in contact with the people of His time. His teaching attracted many, including the people who thought they were the only ones privy to the franchise of God. They were the teachers, doctors of the law, the scribes and the religious establishment of the day.

Throughout His ministry Jesus Christ confronted the Pharisees on many levels. Saying that He was the *Good Shepherd* provoked a bitter reaction. They accused Him of being crazy, as in John 10:20: "And many of them said, 'He has a demon and is mad. Why do you listen to Him?'"

To understand this reaction, let's review what Jesus understood Himself to be:

■ **Greater than Jonah.**

"The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a *greater than Jonah* is here" (Matthew 12:41).

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■ **Greater than Abraham.**

"Are You greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead. Whom do You make Yourself out to be?" (John 8:53).

"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.' Then the Jews said to Him, 'You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?' Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, *before Abraham was, I AM*' " (John 8:56-58).

■ **Greater than John the Baptist.**

"But I have a *greater witness than John's*; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish—the very works that I do—bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me" (John 5:36).

■ **Greater than Moses.**

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up" (John 3:14).

"For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me" (John 5:46).

"And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:27).

"For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17).

"For this One has been counted worthy of *more glory than Moses*, inasmuch as He who built the house has more honor than the house" (Hebrews 3:3).

■ **Greater than Jacob.**

"The woman said to Him, 'Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? *Are You greater than our father Jacob*, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?' Jesus answered and said to her, 'Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life' " (John 4:11-14).

■ **Greater than David, yet He was the Son of David.**

" 'What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?' They said to Him, 'The Son of David.' He said to them, 'How then does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying, 'The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool"'? If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his Son?' " (Matthew 22:42-45).

"For David himself said by the Holy Spirit: 'The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'"" (Mark 12:36).

"He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David" (Luke 1:32).

"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, 'These things says He who is holy, He who is true, He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens' " (Revelation 3:7).

"But one of the elders said to me, 'Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals' " (Revelation 5:5).

■ **Greater than any Levitical high priest.**

"Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people" (Hebrews 2:17).

"Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus" (Hebrews 3:1).

"Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession" (Hebrews 4:14).

"So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You' " (Hebrews 5:5).

Jesus Christ was "called by God as High Priest "according to the order of Melchizedek" (verse 10).

"For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens" (Hebrews 7:26).

"Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens" (Hebrews 8:1).

There exists "a High Priest over the house of God" (Hebrews 10:21).

■ **Equal to the Shepherd of Israel.**

"But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you shall come a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel" (Matthew 2:6).

" 'Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, against the Man who is My Companion,' says the LORD of hosts. 'Strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; then I will turn My hand against the little ones' " (Zechariah 13:7).

"Then Jesus said to them, 'All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: "I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered" ' " (Mark 14:27).

"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want" (Psalm 23:1).

"And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away" (1 Peter 5:4).

"For the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes" (Revelation 7:17).

"Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, You who lead Joseph like a flock; You who dwell between the cherubim, shine forth!" (Psalm 80:1).

"Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that *great Shepherd of the sheep*, through the blood of the everlasting covenant" (Hebrews 13:20).

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep" (John 10:11).

"I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own" (verse 14).

A true picture

The scriptures above present a true picture of the person of Jesus Christ. He had incredible attributes that were superior to all the fathers and patriarchs of Israel. It is also to be noted that Jesus was a prophet. We know this from the writings of the Gospel accounts, such as Matthew 24 and John 8-9.

This may be a good time to take a moment to define what a prophet is. The simplest definition is "one who speaks what God tells him to speak." About one third of our Old Testament contains the writings of major and minor prophets and records for us the words of God to His people through those prophets.

And already, with the definition of a prophet as "spokesman for God," we can see that Jesus was the greatest of the prophets. He not only spoke the words, He embodied them. He lived them. In fact, He *was* them. John calls Jesus "The Word," or "Logos" in the Greek language, emphasizing this point.

Another of Jesus Christ's role is that of a King. We can see why the Pharisees and the religious elite of the day were upset. This man of dubious birth dared to compare Himself with prophets, patriarchs, priests and King David.

The prophets of the old were generally opposed—rejected—and often even persecuted to death. We see the same parallel in Jesus. We know that Jesus encountered unbelief, which led to the ultimate rejection and persecution in His death on the cross. Jesus didn't simply walk away when people rejected His message; He directly confronted their rejection (much like the prophets confronted kings, false priests of Baal and the people). Many believers today do not picture Jesus as confrontational. Most of us tend to imagine a kinder, gentler Jesus. People today like the Sunday-school portraits of Jesus smiling, helping people, healing people and comforting people.

What picture comes to mind when you think of your Savior?