

Knowing Jesus (Mar.18 – April 1)

Master of the Universe

Many pagan ideas of gods are what scientists love to call “gods of the gaps”. This means that people who are ignorant of the forces of nature filled in their lack of knowledge with a god—like the god of thunder, for example. Christianity has never presented a “god of the gaps”; rather, God has revealed that the creation of all things out of nothing was His doing and that laws of nature still depend on God’s power to remain what they are.

Though we often attribute creation to the Father, both the Son and the Holy Spirit were involved in creation. It is hard to imagine that a person who walked this planet and who knows us personally was also the power and creativity that made this universe from its smallest detail to its most vast features.

Read John 1:1-14

It is incredibly hard to understand the nature of God. How can God’s Spirit be a distinct person? How can God’s Word be a distinct person? What is the nature of time, that there should be beginning? We have no experiences to tie to these concepts.

The “beginning” in this passage is referring to the beginning of creation. This includes not only the physical structures of this universe but also of any parallel universes (like Heaven) and all the laws that govern these spaces. This include time itself. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are the only things that transcend time and space that is part of any created universe.

From your knowledge of the universe, what aspects prove that it is created rather than accidental?

Perhaps the most remarkable part of all creation is life. It is enormously complex and shows purposeful design. Often even “scientific” TV shows project the idea that life is relatively simple and easy to create.

What is often presented as the necessary ingredients of life?

Life is clearly more complex than having water and carbon compounds available. Even with all the necessary chemicals and working parts, it is not evident that life is merely chemistry.

What is “life” according to this passage?

Verse 5 speaks about “light” and “darkness”. What do you think this is referring to?

Jesus is the incarnation of a being that has always existed. The Son of God pre-exists time itself and is crucial to all things living. He is life itself. Clearly there is an opposite to Son of God. Darkness can be

experienced in abstract concepts like ignorance or evil, but it also is embodied in a being, inferior to the Son of God, known as Satan.

Why do you think God created Satan?

Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-28

This universe is scheduled for destruction and re-creation. We do not simply move from a physical universe to a “spiritual” universe, as many religions teach and Christians often mistakenly believe.

Why do you think it was so important for the Corinthians to believe that Jesus physically rose from the dead?

The physical world was seen as corrupted and evil by the Greeks. This idea seeped into Christian thinking, leading them to deny the resurrection of Christ and their own resurrection. Paul details God’s plans for a physical resurrection and a remake of all creation. This waits for a few things to happen.

What enemies must be put under Jesus’ feet? What does that mean anyway?

Read Revelation 22:7-17

Being a part of the new Creation is what we desire. Jesus has come to make that possible.

What does it mean to “wash their robes”?

Those who are not washed and still in their sin, clearly still exist. Where is “outside” the city gates?

Does it cost anything to wash our robes?

The Spiritual Warrior

Jesus presents Himself and the Father as very patient and gentle, and so they are. It is hard to think of Jesus as a warrior, even less His passion as an act of war. It is about as unconventional as you can get. Revelation 12 speaks of war in Heaven. Satan and his followers are driven out and limited to Earth. This seems to be in connection with the ministry of Jesus if not the victory of Jesus on the cross.

The struggle with the Kingdom of Satan has a foregone conclusion now, but it is far from done.

Read Mark 5:1-20.

The demons possessing a man all know who Jesus is. They seem concerned that Jesus might torture them.

What do you think they meant?

Jesus sends them into the pigs as a concession.

Why would Jesus make any accommodations for demons at all?

Why would the demons ask for such a thing?

The pigs run off the cliff into the Sea of Galilee and drown.

What do you think happened to the demons?

Read Ephesians 6:10-20

We must also struggle against the powers of Satan's kingdom that is now based here. While Satan may manipulate physical powers like governments, leaders, and individuals; the battle against Satan is a battle with "spiritual forces".

What do you think are rulers, authorities and powers of this dark world?

The fight against them is unconventional.

What is listed as both defensive and offensive weapons?

How is Jesus involved with our struggle?

Read Revelation 19:11-21

The portrayal of Jesus may be disturbing to you. Keep in mind that Revelation uses pictures and figurative language.

Does this passage describe a physical war with many casualties caused by Jesus?

Why is the war conducted?

Why the gross language about birds eating the flesh of corpses?

What is the conclusion of this war?

Your Personal Friend

From Jesus' sinlessness to His vast power, Jesus doesn't seem to be a likely candidate to be our friend. He seems too high above us. That is not how He or His Father sees it, however.

Read Exodus 33:7-11

Here, in the tent of meeting (not the tabernacle), God will have "staff meetings" with Moses. They spoke like friends.

What makes friendship with God seem a little strange?

What do you have in common?

Numbers 12:8 gives a little insight into the nature of these talks.

How does God feel about His "friends"?

Read John 15:15-25

Why does Jesus call us "friends" rather than "servants"?

How is our involvement in God's work and plan different from that of a servant?

Do you feel like you are working together with Jesus when you do the work of the Kingdom?

Read 1 John 4:7-21

Relationships can be rocky, even with friends.

How is our relationship with God characterized here?

God doesn't just meet us in a tent anymore. He dwells within us.

How do we interact with Him for now?