

On the Human Stature of Jesus Christ

The exterior appearance of Jesus must have been extremely attractive. A woman in the crowd broke out into praise of him with the words, *Blessed in the womb that bore Thee and the breasts that nursed Thee*. His response to her *Rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it* seems to suggest that she had bodily excellencies in mind as well as spiritual. The powerful impression which Jesus made on ordinary people certainly owed something to his attractive exterior which by its charm drew everyone to him and held them. Even if this was due primarily to his spiritual and religious power, still, his eyes, with their burning, waking, reproving looks must have been especially striking.¹

We also may cull from scripture an impression of health, power, energy and well being in Jesus. Jesus seems to have been a thoroughly healthy man, not prone to fatigue and with a great capacity for work. We never hear that Jesus was visited by any sickness. A proof of his physical endurance is born out in Scripture. He was in the habit of rising very early.² The hills and the lake were especially dear to him and after a long day he loved to climb some lonely height, or late in the evening get himself taken out on to the shimmering water of Lake Gennesareth and stayed out far into the night.³ We also know that his public life was one of wandering through the mountain valleys of his homeland, from Galilee to Samaria and Judaea and even as far as to the district of Tyre and Sidon.⁴ Despite these arduous journeys he counseled that one should travel light, bringing nothing for the journey, neither staff, money, nor bread, neither have two coats.⁵ Hunger and thirst must therefore have frequently accompanied him. His last journey from Jericho up to Jerusalem was an astounding feat. Under a burning sun through a desolate, rocky waste he climbed some 3500 feet in a six hour climb. Despite this, he seems not tired since that night he takes part in a feast at the house of Lazarus and his sisters.⁶ By far, the greater part of Jesus' public ministry was spent out in the open exposed to rigors of climate in a life filled with labor and toil with often little time eat⁷. He owned no home and "had nowhere to lay his head."⁸ Hence he spent more than a few nights sleeping out in the elements. Only a sound body of physical stamina could have endured such as this.

¹For example see how Mark remarks of the eyes of the Lord in the following passages: 3:5,34; 5:32; 8:33; 10:21; 23:27.

²Mark 1:35.

³cf Mk 4:35; 6:35.

⁴Matt 15:21.

⁵Luke 9:3.

⁶John 12:2.

⁷Mk 3:20; Mk 6:31.

⁸Matt 8:20.

And as for his mental stature, He faced many malevolent enemies among the Pharisees and Sadducees and dealt with them effectively reducing them to silence (so much so that they began to plot his death). In addition there were tiring explanations to be offered to disciples who were often slow to learn. His self assurance is manifest. In the midst of a raging storm he went on peacefully sleeping till his disciples woke him. He immediately grasps the situation and rebukes the storm.

There was tremendous clarity in his thought. He had an absolute grasp of His goal which gave him an inflexibility and finality (in the good sense) of his will. Jesus knows what he wills and determinedly pursues it. This is evident even at 12 years of age in the temple. The three temptations in the desert are turned back forcefully by the Lord. He is never deterred by opposition. There is opposition among the kindred of his own town, among his followers⁹ and even among the Apostles.¹⁰ Here we have a man of clear will. He demands the same determination and certainty from his followers. *No man, putting his hand to the plough and turning back is fit for the reign of God.*"¹¹

He bore so clearly the marks of the true, the upright, and the strong, that even his enemies had to declare when they came to him, *Master, we know that thou art a true speaker and carest not for the opinion of any man.*¹² He shows forth a unity and purity and transcendency that reflect his interior life of union with the Father.

His loyalty to the will of his Father is unwavering and clear even though it leads directly to the Cross. Jesus in every way is a heroic and epic figure in the purest sense of that word staking his life for a known truth and demanding the same of his followers. Jesus was a born leader. When he calls his apostles, they immediately arise to follow after him.¹³ Again and again the Apostles note how they wondered among themselves about the marvels of his actions and even how these struck terror into them.¹⁴ At times they did not dare question him any further.¹⁵

The same wonderment affected the crowds.¹⁶ He spoke with towering authority and the people sought the loftiest images to in wondering who he could be. *Is he John the Baptist? Elijah? Jeremiah*

⁹cf esp. John 6:57.

¹⁰cf esp. Matt 16:22.

¹¹Luke 9:62.

¹²Mk 12:14.

¹³cf esp Mk 1:16; 1:20.

¹⁴cf esp. Mk 9:5; 6:51; 4:40; 10:24,26.

¹⁵Mk 9:3.

¹⁶cf Mk 5:15,33,42; 9:14

or one prophets?¹⁷ His spiritual power and authority discharged themselves in stern language and bold action when the powers of evil arrayed themselves against him. Demons trembled against his awesome power.¹⁸

He also rebukes strongly the evil that is in men and warns them that they will not be worthy of him if they do not repent.¹⁹ He is absolutely clear and unflinching in dealing with the scribes and pharisees.²⁰ As shown above, he knows himself to be the Messiah and is anything but a fair-weather Messiah but follows the model of the prophets rebuking all enemies of the truth He proclaims He speaks of hypocrites, serpents and generations of vipers and liars.²¹ He calls Herod a fox.²²

Although he was never one to tread lightly he never forgets himself or loses control. His anger is always the expression of supreme moral freedom declaring, *for this I came into the World, that I should give testimony to the truth.*²³ Because He was so consistently true to His Father's will his life was only "Yes and No" and he reacted with great severity against anything that was ungodly or hateful to God. He was ready to stake his own life for the truth and die for it.

To describe Jesus psychologically would be to describe him as a man of purposeful virility, absolute genuineness, austere uprightness and heroic in performance. There is no evidence that anywhere within himself he is rent by any severe spiritual conflict. He knows the truth, himself and with exact clarity executes his mission.

¹⁷Matt 16:14.

¹⁸Matt 4:10.

¹⁹Matt 13:41sq; 13:49sq; 25:1sq; 14sq; 33sq; 18:34; 22:7; 22:11sq.

²⁰Matt 23:14,24,25

²¹cf Matt 23:33.

²²Lk 13:32.

²³John 18:37.