

# Who Is Jesus? By George W. Truett

*Truly this was the Son of God.—  
Matthew 27:54.*

I speak to you from this statement in Matthew, the utterance of the centurion as he witnessed the death of Christ upon the cross: "Truly this was the Son of God." There have been only three views in the world as to Jesus of Nazareth. One view has been that He was a bad man. Another, that He was a good man, but utterly mad. And still another that He was what He claimed to be—the Son of God. These three views are the only ones that can be held. There cannot be any other. They comprehend all the notions of men, from the day of Christ's birth until this present hour.

Three views: One that He was bad, a blasphemer, not to be believed, nor trusted, nor honored at all. Caiaphas, the high priest, before whom Jesus was arraigned, declared Him to be a blasphemer, worthy of death. That is one view. Another view was, and is, that He was a good man, but utterly mad, thoroughly deceived, utterly unbalanced. Pilate held to the view that He was good. "I find no fault in him," was the testimony of Governor Pilate, when Jesus was arraigned before him. And then, the centurion uttered the statement of our text, when he beheld the crucifixion. When he saw the marvelous manifestations of nature suffering and sympathizing in that dread hour, he cried out at last:

"Truly this was the Son of God." There have been only three views, and these comprehend all from time to eternity. Let us examine them.

Was Jesus mad? Will it be seriously claimed now, that Jesus was mad? The wisest men of earth will not make that claim. The most pronounced unbelievers of earth will not make that claim. With uncovered head any man of sense, any man whose opinion on anything is worth listening to—with uncovered head, he will say: "Jesus was the fairest of all earth's men, and his teachings the sublimest, the most glorious." Any man who would not say that is not worth listening to on any subject and I dare say you would not stop to listen to him.

With uncovered head, the great men of the earth, whether saint or sinner, whether believer or doubter, have said that the teachings of Jesus Christ stamp Him as earth's wisest man; as earth's most perfect man, as earth's most prudent man. The Sermon on the Mount stands out even today as the most arresting discourse that ever fell on human ears. I am not surprised that Daniel Webster said: "A man, simply a man, only a man, could not be the author of such a sermon."

The "golden rule" uttered by Jesus stamps Him as the wisest person the world has seen. Just the golden rule. "Do unto others, as you would have others do unto you" is a statement that the world never approximated, in any shape, fashion or form, until it was enunciated by Jesus Christ. Men will hardly claim now, with seriousness, that Jesus was a

hair-brained madman, as some of them did claim in other generations.

Was Jesus bad? Was the statement of the high priest justifiable, that Jesus was a blasphemer; that He was bad, and not to be trusted at all? Very few from that self-same day have made the assertion that Jesus was bad. Very few. I know of no man in all the world today who has the audacity to make the claim that Jesus of Nazareth was bad. Strange indeed is the man who would take up the things that Jesus uttered and make the declaration that these were emanations from a bad mind, a bad heart, a bad life. Even His foes are now uniform in their testimony that Jesus was good.

Just a little before he died, Mr. Ingersoll, who seemed to be the least likely man of the race to say anything good about Jesus, said: "After all, he was indeed good; and his was a life crowned with the teachings of his life, and the practice of his teaching harmonizing." Ingersoll was one of the last men in the world to be expected to offer a testimony as to the good character of the Lord Jesus. All of Jesus' foes are agreed now in their testimony that He stands out among earth's men, higher than the highest, unrivaled, unmatched, unapproached by any other born of woman. There is little conflict of testimony or opinion on that point, today.

If Jesus Christ was not mad, and if He was not bad, then He was what He claimed to be. He was God incarnate. It will not do for a man to say that He was good, but not God. The Jew or any other man who compliments Jesus and stops at that gets himself into interminable difficulties. Jesus was

bad or He was good. Jesus was good, and if He was good, He was God; for when you examine the claims that Jesus made respecting Himself, if those claims were not true, literally, unqualifiedly, absolutely, then Jesus was the arch impostor of all the ages. He was not only a deceiver, but He was earth's arch deceiver of the children of men; an arch deceiver, a willful deceiver as to the things most meaningful that can ever be considered by the minds and hearts of men. No sane man can call in question that Jesus was utterly good. And, if utterly good, then Jesus was God; for His claims all go to naught and He stands out, I repeat, as a blasphemer, as earth's arch deceiver, if He was not literally what He claimed to be.

Now, look for a moment at the claims of Jesus. He declared that He came down from Heaven on a mission for a little while here on the earth; that He came on that mission to do the will of His heavenly Father, to seek and to save the lost by making atonement for the sins of all who would believe on Him and follow Him. He declared that He was the way, and the truth, and the life; and that no one could come unto the Father except by Him. That was His uniform testimony and declaration.

Jesus often referred to Himself as the Son of man. Not a son of man, but *the* son of man. Not a son of a Jew, nor the son of a Greek, nor the son of a Roman, but of universal humanity. And, in His life, He illustrated that great claim. He rose above His environment. He grew up in a little town. He never went out of His own country, Palestine, after His babyhood, and yet, Jesus was the universal man. He did not

resemble a Jew any more than He resembled a Greek; any more than He resembled a Roman; yet Jesus was a Jew. No race or nation can claim Him exclusively. He belongs to all. Jesus is earth's universal man. He was in frequent conflict with the Jewish people on account of their racial prejudices, their religious bigotry and their social exclusiveness. They despised the Greeks and Romans and all other peoples, and were despised in return.

He declared: "I am the son of man," and then He went on to declare more than that—"I am the son of God." I have been surprised to read various statements from doubters, who rise up and insist that Jesus never had the audacity to declare that He was the son of God. They only advertise their utter ignorance of the Word of God. Repeatedly Jesus declared: "I am the son of God, the Almighty." He said it to the high priest when arraigned before him for trial. The high priest put Him on oath: "I adjure thee, by the living God, tell me whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God, as you claim to be," and He answered: "Thou hast said." And then the high priest rent his clothes and declared that He must be put to death; that He was a blasphemer, and for that blasphemy He must be put to death. Jesus with His eyes wide open, knowing the Jewish law, said that He was the son of God. He declared that self-same thing to the high priest. And when Pilate, the governor, wanted to release Him, the crowd clamored back the cry: "Nay we cannot release him, because he has affirmed that he is the son of God, and he must be put to death."

When He was on the cross, His enemies stood and taunted Him: "Let him save himself now, if he can. He claims that he is the son of God. Surely the son of God can save himself. Let him now show the people his infinite power." And all of the inspired writers bore testimony that Jesus was the Son of God. The apostle John bore that testimony again and again. "John saw and bear record that Jesus was the son of God." It was the burden of that apostle's message everywhere: "He is Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God." And the centurion, witnessing that awful struggle, the death of Jesus on the cross, cried out at last and gave his testimony: "Surely he was the son of God."

Jesus not only claimed that He was the son of God, but He claimed identity with God the Father. Time and time again that was the declaration from His earnest, honest, candid lips, that He was God. Time and again, He said to the people: "You talk about God the Father. I say unto you, he that hath seen me hath seen the Father. I am in the Father and the Father in me: I and my Father are one. I was with him yonder before the worlds were."

Time and again, that was the assertion that came from His lips; and it shows that He claimed attributes which belong only to an Infinite God. For Himself He claimed the attribute of eternity. One day, when they quibbled and talked to Him about Abraham, long dead, hundreds and hundreds of years, He said: "You talk about Abraham. I antedate Abraham. Long before Abraham was, I was. I preceded him." And then, again in one of His prayers, there came the expression: "Father glorify me now on earth, as I

pray, with the glory which I had with thee before the worlds were."

Jesus was for a season down here in the flesh, and He not only claimed to be God's son, and God Himself manifest in the flesh, but He asserted that in Himself there were the attributes of Jehovah. He claimed omnipotent power. They brought around Him their sick, their diseased, their sinful, and He said: "By a word I can heal your sick," and He did it. And He said, "By a word I can cleanse you from your sins," and He did it. And He said: "By a word I can raise your dead men," and He did it.

Jesus Christ, I repeat, was utterly bad or He was God. Would a bad man teach the lessons that He taught, and make the statements that He made? Jesus is one of the three things claimed. He was mad, or He was bad, or He was God. By His own divine claims, He made the assertion of His divinity. He asserted His omnipresence to His disciples, when He made the statement: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." And again, "Lo, I will be with you always, even unto the end of the world."

Jesus claimed to be the antidote for all the evils and sorrows of men, the panacea for all the afflictions of the children of men. Wonderful audacity! Compare His claims with the claims of others. Others talk about rules, about systems, about creeds, about philosophy: Jesus stands out before men and declares: "I am God. Salvation is in me; not in a creed, not in a system, not in a philosophy, not in a church. Salvation is in me." And He stands out unmatched

and unrivaled in that very assertion. "I am the bread of life. I am life for men. I am the way, the truth and the life. I am the door into heaven for men. I will give them rest and peace and cleansing and eternal salvation, if they will come to me."

Those were claims that Jesus everywhere made. Were they claims of a madman? Were they claims of a bad man? Such claims were utterly false unless they came from the lips of One to whom all authority in heaven and on earth hath been given. If Jesus Christ was only a man, then we have the spectacle of a man, nineteen hundred years ago going infinitely beyond the thought of the wisest men of that age, of any other age. And it is utterly inconceivable that the Jesus of the Scriptures was only a figment of the imagination of the men who wrote the inspired Word of God. Jesus Christ was and is an eternal reality—the God-man, the one perfect union of the divine and the human, the Son of God and the Son of man. In other words, Jesus of Nazareth was God incarnate in human form.

There can be no doubt that Jesus claimed divinity for Himself and His mission!

Now, let us consider the personality of Jesus Christ. There have been men who made adroit attempts to show that there was no such person as Jesus of Nazareth. A number of attempts have been made to show that Jesus was a myth, that He never lived at all. There is no need of argument with men of that class. They are blinded by prejudice and are not capable of weighing evidence or

reaching a logical conclusion based on incontrovertible evidence.

No candid and capable mind will call in question that Jesus of Nazareth lived and journeyed, and ate, and talked, and preached, and died on the cross, just as the Bible affirms. No candid, capable man would even think of calling that in question. Unbelievers are sure to get themselves into interminable difficulties right there. Strauss and Tremaine and Spencer and Gilbert and others declare that the man was undoubtedly perfect, but they find themselves in the mazes as they deny His divinity; for they have a perfect man, asserting that He was God; asserting that He came down from heaven; asserting that He came to lift up a fallen world; asserting His eternal existence; claiming for Himself both omnipotence and omnipresence.

Those men who place a chaplet on the brow of Jesus and say that He was the wisest, the most prudent, and the best of all earth's men—if their theory be true, are putting their chaplet upon the most consummate blasphemer, impostor and falsifier that earth ever saw.

The personality of Jesus is a proof of His divinity. Otherwise the great civilizations of the world would not have reckoned time from the day of the coming of Jesus. Every business man today gives acknowledgment of the fact of Jesus' divinity in every letter that he sends out in the mail. Anno Domini, A.D., means "in the year of our Lord." Every civilization on the earth reckons dates from the time that divinity left heaven for a few years to dwell among men, to show them the way back to God. All state papers in

every land, all legal papers and every date of importance in the world of letters are reckoned from that same date.

I would have you look not only at Jesus' personality, but I would have you look also at His character. His character stands out before us by universal consent as absolutely flawless. I have searched earnestly in these latter years to find one man who had the audacity to criticize the character of Jesus Christ; and it stands out just as Pilate affirmed: "I find no fault in him." And you remember, Jesus, in effect, said to men, when He was on the earth: "I am free from sin."

A character without spot or blemish or wrinkle or flaw! Who owned that character? Compare Jesus with other men. O, friends, if Jesus was only a man, why cannot other men reach perfection? Look at Moses! whose great brain formulated the principles of law and government and education, which principles live on today, and yet, Moses sinned egregiously, time and again, and the record is put down in this Book of God. David was the man who greatly pleased God in his life—and yet, the time came when he coveted Uriah's lamb and brought shame unspeakable upon his name and upon his entire kingdom. Look at Elijah, that mighty champion of righteousness, who on Carmel's heights defeated and slew the hundreds of false prophets; the man who prayed and in answer thereto the fire came down from heaven; and yet, who in a panic of cowardice fled into a far country, because of the threat of a wicked woman.

Look at Paul, the apostle, and Barnabas, his friend. These two fell out and had a fierce quarrel and separated. But

Jesus is One in whom no man can find mote, or spot, or defect, or blemish. And no man can justly bring one single accusation against the character of Jesus of Nazareth. That very fact is a demonstration overwhelming, that the perfect Man was what He claimed to be—God as well as man.

Look also, I pray you, at His teaching. "Never man spake like this man," He spoke with the voice of authority in His every utterance. The teachers of His day, and of every other day, must quote the sayings of others to establish the authority of their own teachings. Not so did Jesus speak. His words were always: "I say unto you." He stood out and talked about the great law of vengeance, which was in the old Mosaic law. The old law was "an eye for an eye, and a life for a life." "Not so my law," said Jesus. "Recompense not evil for evil, but instead, return good for evil." The teachings of Jesus were another proof of His divinity.

Look at His works. That was a great argument Christ made when the people would not believe Him. He said: "If you will not believe me, I pray you, believe me for my very work's sake." Was it not a telling argument? If you will not believe in me, then, look, see what I do, and believe in me. If some man comes to tell me that Jesus of Nazareth did not rise from the dead literally, as the Scriptures affirm, then I answer him: "Jesus Christ has as much power in the earth today, as if He did rise from the dead." Jesus Christ died over nineteen hundred years ago, and millions today would offer their lives a willing sacrifice on His altar. Napoleon talked like a man of sense to one of his marshals. He asked him: "Who was Jesus of Nazareth?" and the marshal answered

back that he could not tell him, and Napoleon said: "If you do not know that Jesus of Nazareth was God, I made a mistake in making you one of my marshals." Later on, Napoleon said: "I build up great empires by the point of the sword. Jesus built an empire, not on swords, but upon love, and though He has been dead over eighteen hundred years, millions of men would fight for that man, so long dead." Said Napoleon: "If you cannot understand that He was more than man, I made a mistake in making you my marshal." Christ's works in the earth demonstrated His divinity.

Look at His mission. He came with a new mission. Jesus did not come to be a reformer. Jesus came to be a former. "Behold I make all things new," was the utterance of Jesus of Nazareth. Others built on many things. Mohammed built on false hope. Mormonism builds on its system of laws. All heathen religions build on false foundations. "I come to make all things new," was the voice of this new teacher in the earth. And here you have the spectacle of One, not following the teaching of any school or college, who wrote but one line while in the world, so far as we know, and that was written on the ground, in the presence of an unfortunate woman's accusers: and yet we have the spectacle of One whose teachings reshape the world.

Let us notice His own statement: "I will come to Jerusalem, and I will be slain there, and they will bury me, and in three days I will rise from the grave, and my death shall be the great sign of victory forever." Christ did not point men to His transfiguration mountain, when the old mountain was lighted up with glory; but He pointed them

to His death as the transaction whereby the world should be saved. Christ took what men called defeat, utter defeat, overwhelming defeat; and, out of that, said: "I will win the world." Men do not build monuments to thei❖