



IF JESUS IS LIKE THIS, WHAT IS GOD LIKE? SOME COMMENTS

Here are some comments that Christian theologians make to explain the background and some of the meanings of these texts.

THE BEGINNING OF JESUS' TEACHING

The Prophet Isaiah wrote several hundred years before Jesus lived. This passage shows that God is interested in releasing people from suffering and oppression. Isaiah also says that God anoints his prophet to bring this freedom. For Gospel writer Luke, Jesus is also anointed by God. It shows Jesus' priorities: bringing good news to those who need it most.

Luke 4:16–21 (CEV)

JESUS AND THE PARALYSED MAN

Jesus shows his compassion, taking time to address the needs of the paralysed man, even though he is already surrounded by a crowd of people.

He claims the authority to forgive sins. This causes problems among some of the religious experts there who believe only God can do that. But Jesus backs up his words with action – showing that he can also bring healing to the paralysed man.

Luke 5:17–39 (God's Word)

JESUS ADDRESSES HIS AUDIENCES

Jesus tells three stories back to back – the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin and the Lost Son. He has two audiences. One group includes the dodgy people 'of doubtful reputation' – people who are considered sinners and outcasts. The other group is made up of good people who follow God's teachings. But they are upset that Jesus does not seem to notice that he is mixing with sinners! Jesus' three stories have something to say to the 'sinners': God loves them and wants them to be saved. He also has something for the good people to learn too: they should be pleased, not critical, when God welcomes unlikely people to his party.

Luke 15:1–7 (The Message)

JESUS TEACHES HIS DISCIPLES

John's Gospel includes a long section where Jesus teaches his disciples. It is set in the hours before he is arrested and executed. It is quite different in style from the other three Gospels. Some theologians suggest this is because it was written later, and John had a chance to reflect on what Jesus' teachings meant.

Here Jesus points out that loving others is the key to following him – which will mean giving up your own needs for someone else, even to the extent of giving up your life for others. Jesus was just about to go and do just that by dying on the cross.

John 15:9–17 (CEB)

JESUS WELCOMES CHILDREN

This passage suggests that anyone can come to Jesus, no matter how young. No one is insignificant for Jesus.

Matthew 19:13–15 (The Message)

JESUS IS EXECUTED ON THE CROSS

Even while suffering the agony of the cross, Jesus forgives those who execute him. Christians see Jesus' death as the ultimate sign of God's love for people – Jesus sacrifices his life to save others.

Luke 23:33–34 (CEB)

THE RESURRECTED JESUS APPEARS TO HIS DISCIPLES

For most Christians, the resurrection of Jesus is the cornerstone of their belief in Jesus as God. They see that this shows that Jesus is Lord of life and death – that sin and death could not defeat him, that he rose to new life and opens the way for others to do so too.

John 20:19–23 (CEB)