

What do we believe about ... Jesus?

fellowship **Jesus** *community*
saviour **cross** *king*
Christians **evangelistic** *love*
eternal church
judge
Paradox
divine
anointed
prophesy *humanity*
human together
relationship **nurture**
believe *God*
apostolic
unity **Spirit** *love*



The
United
Reformed
Church

What do we believe about Jesus?

The Son of God

The New Testament describes Jesus as God's one and only Son (John 3:16). Everything that is distinctive about the Christian faith is closely related to the person of Jesus and what it means to say he is the Son of God. Our view of Jesus has shaped the way we understand God, how we experience salvation and the nature of the hope we have in the present and for the future.

With the whole Christian Church, the United Reformed Church believes that *who* Jesus is cannot be divorced from what he *said*

and *did*. Listening to what he taught and following his way of life cannot be separated from acknowledging him as Lord, a word used of him by his earliest followers who knew that to do so meant

'Christians take the question of who Jesus is very seriously'

seeing him as in some way God. United Reformed Church worship services honour Jesus as divine in our hymns. We pray through Jesus and we share in a meal that Jesus invites us to, eating bread and drinking wine as symbols of his redemptive death. We bless one another in his name as we go out into the world.

In all of this, it is clear that Christians take the question of who Jesus is very seriously. We believe that it is only God who can make God known and in continuity with the earliest Christians,



we proclaim that Jesus is fully God come among human beings as a fully human being.

This is how, at formation in 1972, the United Reformed Church expressed faith in its foundational document, the Basis of Union:

We believe that God, in his infinite love for men [sic.], gave his eternal Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who became man, lived on earth in perfect love and obedience, died upon the cross for our sins, rose again from the dead and lives for evermore, saviour, judge and king.

In 1997, when making a Statement of Faith in gender-inclusive language, the United Reformed Church confirmed that Jesus is fully God and fully human in this way:

We worship God revealed in Jesus Christ, the eternal Word of God made flesh; who lived our human life, died for sinners on the cross; who was raised from the dead, and proclaimed by the apostles, Son of God; who lives eternally, as saviour and sovereign, coming in judgement and mercy, to bring us to eternal life.

Born of a woman

This Jesus, who we believe was there at the beginning with God (John 1), is also a child of time. He was born a Jew in the Roman province of Judea and raised in a carpenter's home in Galilee. The Bible describes him as a travelling teacher who was widely

‘widely recognised in his time as a healer and worker of miracles’

recognised in his time as a healer and worker of miracles. The power of God's Spirit was apparent in his life and it characterised his ministry. It linked his ministry to the history of Israel while also

demonstrating the divine origin of his life and work. At the beginning of his public life, according to Luke, he read a passage from the book of Isaiah and declared that the prophecy had been fulfilled at that moment in time:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord
has anointed me.
He has sent me to preach good news to the poor,
to proclaim release to the prisoners and recovery of
sight to the blind,
to liberate the oppressed, and to proclaim the year of
the Lord's favour

(Luke 4:18-19)



The New Testament writers indicate that Jesus related completely to God, whom he called 'Father'. There is perhaps nothing that shows this more clearly than his life of prayer. The more significant the decisions that needed to be made, the more urgently he called to his Father for guidance and strength: 'During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission' (Hebrews 5:7).

'while fully God,
Jesus was also
fully human'

With the whole Christian Church, we believe in the importance of the supreme paradox that while fully God, Jesus was also fully human. Jesus came into our world alongside us and shared in its pain, frustration and suffering. He sought in all things to do his Father's will and eventually found himself being crushed in doing so. He stood as a man before God, in no way different from us. He had a body like ours and a brain that operated in the same way that ours does. He was part of a religious culture that shaped his life and his thinking. How he acted and spoke

can be understood in the light of the world in which he lived and the beliefs he held.

'He is the model for how we might now live'

Jesus was human in the same way that we are, and suffered temptation as we do. But he did not experience the damaging and dehumanizing effects of 'sin', its fears and addictions, its self-delusions and pretensions. We could say he was the first really human person to walk this planet. He is the model for how we might now live. He is the pattern of our new humanity.

An Opening of Eyes

As with the whole Christian Church, we do not believe that Jesus is understood in this way by any tools available in the physical, social or historical sciences. Jesus is known in this way by faith. Followers of Jesus, including members of his own family, came to believe, after he was raised from death, when their eyes were opened by the Spirit, that he really was the Messiah, the one anointed by God, truly human and truly divine.



This is one in a series of booklets about the United Reformed Church. The booklets can be read and downloaded at www.urc.org.uk/believe



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