



CATHOLICISM EPISODE 1

Lesson 1: *Is Jesus actually God or a lying lunatic?*

Catechist Preparation

The teacher or catechist should review the information below, including the Scripture and Catechism passages, in preparation for interaction with the participants.

VIDEO OUTLINE (LESSON 1)

I. Both God and Human

- A. Christ is the privileged door (Chesterton)
- B. The divine humor (Dante's *Divine Comedy*)
- C. "And on that sacred jest/the whole of Christianity doth rest" (Chesterton)
- D. Jesus emerged as a deeply disconcerting and subversive figure

II. Jesus is Lord

- A. The Incarnation is the central "hinge" of Christianity
- B. The question: "Who do men say that the Son of man is?" (Matt. 16:13)
- C. Buddha, Mohammed and Confucius did not claim to be divine
- D. Jesus compels a choice
- E. Jesus is either God or he is a bad man and a liar; there is no middle ground
- F. "...and they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid" (Mk. 10:32)

COMMENTARY: LESSON 1

Both God and Human

Jesus Christ is unique, fully human and fully divine; he is the privileged door by which man can be restored to right relationship with God. Yet the story of God becoming man is not abstract or academic, but is instead bursting with deep mystery, heavenly joy, and rich humor. It is what G. K. Chesterton called “that sacred jest” upon which “the whole of Christianity doth rest.” The Incarnation is at the heart of the divine comedy, as the great Italian poet, Dante Alighieri, put into verse in one of the world’s greatest literary works, the *Divina Commedia*.

The uniqueness of Jesus is captured by the Evangelists in numerous passages in the Gospels. One such passage, which Bishop Barron notes is rarely commented on, is found in the tenth chapter of the Gospel of Mark: “And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them; and they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid” (Mk. 10:32).

Why the amazement? Why the fear? St. Mark describes several other similar reactions of amazement and fear by the disciples, each the result of divine actions by Jesus, as when he calmed the raging storm on the Sea of Galilee (Mk. 4:40), when he cast out demons (Mk. 5:1-15), when he was transfigured on the mount (Mk. 9:1-6), when he spoke prophetically about his death and Resurrection (Mk. 9:30-32), and when his Resurrection was announced by the angel at the tomb (Mk. 16:1-8). The fear was that of humans in the presence of God, as when Moses and the people were afraid at Mount Sinai amidst the blazing, thundering glory of the Lord (cf., Ex. 3:6; 20:18). The amazement and fear were not due to Jesus being a mere teacher or human leader, but because he was God.

Buddha, Mohammed, Confucius, and other religious founders and leaders did not claim to be God, the Son of God, or divine. They did not say they were the Way, the Truth, and the Life (Jn. 14:6). Instead, they pointed toward truth, toward a path, toward a way of living. That is quite different from the words and actions of Jesus, who never presented himself as one of many viable options, but as The One. The shocking and singular nature of Jesus’ identity was summarized and articulated adeptly in *Dominus Iesus*, the Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith’s August 6, 2000, document on the “unicity and salvific universality of Jesus Christ and the Church”:

The doctrine of faith must be firmly believed which proclaims that Jesus of Nazareth, son of Mary, and he alone, is the Son and the Word of the Father. The Word, which “was in the beginning with God” (Jn 1:2) is the same as he who “became flesh” (Jn 1:14). In Jesus, “the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Mt 16:16), “the whole fullness of divinity dwells in bodily form” (Col 2:9). He is the “only begotten Son of the Father, who is in the bosom of the Father” (Jn 1:18), his “beloved Son, in whom we have redemption... In him the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him, God was pleased to reconcile all things to himself, on earth and in the heavens, making peace by the blood of his Cross” (Col 1:13-14; 19-20). (par.10)



It was not by accident or coincidence that Jesus asked his disciples about who they and others thought of him and his identity in “the district of Caesarea Philippi” (Matt. 16:13). A mostly pagan area almost twenty-five miles north of the Sea of Galilee, the region originally named “Panion” or “Paneas” after the Greco-Roman deity Pan, an ancient deity of the natural world. It was eventually renamed by Philip, the son of Herod the Great, in honor of Tiberius Caesar and himself. There at the base of Mount Hermon—which marked the northern border of Israel—water flowed underground and surfaced in a cave at the base of a high limestone cliff. At the time of Christ it was a place of devoted pagan worship (especially to Baal), with niches cut into the cliff holding statues of numerous deities. Pagans believed it marked the spot where the netherworld met the material world. At the top of this cliff stood a temple in honor of Caesar.

It was, in other words, a veritable and visually arresting display of “Who’s Who” among the pagan gods. “Who,” asked Jesus of his disciples, “do men say that the Son of Man is?” After hearing the responses—John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets—Jesus asked the question he asks of every man: “But who do you say that I am?” He stands before the false gods of this world and asks for our decision; he compels a choice. He is either God or a bad man—a liar or a lunatic.

“Jesus Is Lord!”

“To confess that Jesus is Lord is distinctive of Christian faith.”

– *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, par. 202.

The word *kyrios* was used in ancient Greece and the larger Hellenistic world to refer to a superior or someone in authority. It was employed by the Romans for their emperors and was used by some pagans for their gods. While St. Paul’s use of the term for Jesus had an eye toward the pagan world, it was grounded in Jewish tradition and usage. First-century Jews largely refused to pronounce the Hebrew name for God (*Yahweh*), instead substituting other names. The most common substitute was *adonay*, meaning “Lord,” which was translated to *kyrios* in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of Scripture used by Greek-speaking Jews living in Egypt, Rome, and other parts of the Mediterranean world.

The term was a favorite of St. Paul, who calls Jesus *Kyrios* some 180 times in his letters. For example:

... IF YOU CONFESS WITH YOUR LIPS THAT JESUS IS LORD AND BELIEVE IN YOUR HEART THAT GOD RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD, YOU WILL BE SAVED. (ROM. 10:9)

THEREFORE I WANT YOU TO UNDERSTAND THAT NO ONE SPEAKING BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD EVER SAYS “JESUS BE CURSED!” AND NO ONE CAN SAY “JESUS IS LORD” EXCEPT BY THE HOLY SPIRIT. (1 COR. 12:3)

And, from St. Paul’s epistle to the Philippians, a hymn likely used in early Christian worship:

THEREFORE GOD HAS HIGHLY EXALTED HIM AND BESTOWED ON HIM THE NAME WHICH IS ABOVE EVERY NAME, THAT AT THE NAME OF JESUS EVERY KNEE SHOULD BOW, IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH AND UNDER THE EARTH, AND EVERY TONGUE CONFESS THAT JESUS CHRIST IS LORD, TO THE GLORY OF GOD THE FATHER. (PHIL. 2:9-11)

In another striking passage, from his first letter to the Christians in Corinth, St. Paul rejects any polytheistic understanding of Jesus and the Father—a commonplace belief in the ancient pagan world—instead writing that “yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist” (1 Cor. 8:5-6). In his book, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Eerdmans, 2003), New Testament scholar Larry W. Hurtado writes:

In this astonishingly bold association of Jesus with God, Paul adapts wording from the traditional Jewish confession of God’s uniqueness, known as the Shema, from Deuteronomy 6:4: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord” (Kyrios heis estin [LXX], translating Heb. Yahweh ‘echad). (p. 114)

Jesus, in other words, is one with the Father in such an astounding way that he and the Father are separate persons, yet God is one in nature.

Bible passages to review:

- Philippians 2:1-11
- Luke 1
- Matthew 1

Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraphs to review:

- 461-463 (Incarnation)
- 446-451 (Jesus is Lord)
- 430-445 (Incarnation)

Terms to Know:

- **Incarnation:** The Christian belief that God the Son, the second person of the Trinity, assumed a human nature and became the man, Jesus Christ, in order to save man from sin and death.



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Session with Participants



LEARNING GOAL

Read aloud. (This paragraph is written in the Pilgrimage Journal.)

“Jesus is Lord.” -Philippians 2:11

Our Christian faith is rooted in the Person of Jesus Christ. In this first episode, we travel with Bishop Barron to the lands where Jesus was born, taught, died and rose from the dead. We will learn what it means to say that Jesus is “messiah” and “Lord,” and we will understand why his disciples were “amazed and afraid” in his presence, and what the Good News they preached after his Resurrection was all about. We will see how important it is to let Jesus amaze us, too.

Direct participants to do the following things:

- Discuss the Learning Goal of the lesson.
- OPTIONAL: On the *Catholicism* map, locate the following:
Bethlehem, Nazareth, Sea of Galilee (Israel)
- In your Bible, find the New Testament and identify the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.
- Have someone from the group read Philippians 2:1-11 aloud.
- As a family or group, pray the *Glory Be*: “*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.*”

VIEW VIDEO:

Digital Lesson 1: *Is Jesus Really God or a Lying Lunatic?*
or DVD Tracks 1-4:

- Introduction
- Both God and Human
- Jesus is Lord
- Amazed and Afraid

Advise participants to use their Journals to take notes or jot down questions or comments that they might have as they view the episode.

- Questions about definitions or ideas we want to learn more about
- Places Bishop Barron visited that we liked and want to know more about
- Statements or ideas that were really helpful



Pause the video at any time to answer questions or explain something you think might be elusive. You can draw on the information provided above in the Catechist Preparation section.

AFTER THE EPISODE

Discuss these questions that are included in the Journal. Before discussing the questions as a group, give the participants time to prepare them in their Journals.

Questions for Understanding – Lesson 1:

1. What did Jesus do that was strange and upsetting to people?

Jesus engaged in divine actions: calming storms, driving out demons, speaking prophetically, forgiving sins. Jesus indicated by word and action that he had divine authority.

2. Jesus gives us a choice. What is that choice?

The choice is to accept him as Lord and Messiah, or not.

Questions for Application – Lesson 1:

1. When you think about Jesus, what stories, sayings and events come to mind?
2. What does “Jesus is Lord” mean in your everyday life?
3. What did you learn in this section that was new to you?



CATHOLICISM EPISODE 1

Lesson 2: *What was the Messiah supposed to do?*

Catechist Preparation

The teacher or catechist should review the information below, including the Scripture and Catechism passages, in preparation for interaction with the participants.

VIDEO OUTLINE (LESSON 2)

I. The Work of Jesus, the Messiah

- A. Described in the Torah (Law), Prophets, and Psalms
- B. The Messiah, the Anointed One, called to four tasks (N. T. Wright)
- C. Jesus accomplished the four tasks in the strangest way

II. The First Task: Gathering the Tribes of Israel

- A. This gathering is for the sake of the world
- B. The Kingdom of God is the call to be gathered and reunited
 - 1. Man is scattered due to sin
 - 2. God desires man to be gathered together into a people
- C. Jesus shepherded the people of Israel, forming the New Israel, the Church

III. The Second Task: Cleansing the Temple of God

- A. Adam was the first priest; the Garden of Eden was the first temple
 - 1. Adoration is perfect, proper alignment to God
 - 2. Original sin is the adoration of the wrong thing(s)
- B. Israel was a temple, created to teach right praise and to offer sacrifices
 - 1. Sacrifice is the act of giving something of creation back to the Creator
 - 2. The prophets spoke of God's presence leaving the Temple and looked forward to a new and perfect Temple
- C. The cleansing of the Temple by Jesus
 - 1. Not an act of rebellion, but of rebuilding
 - 2. The Temple to be rebuilt, however, was the temple of his body
 - 3. Jesus is the dwelling-place of God, the perfect sacrifice

IV. The Third Task: Dealing with the Enemies of Israel

A. The Davidic Warrior

1. Israel was constantly oppressed by other peoples: the Egyptians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Philistines, Romans
 - i. This oppression was the result of Israel's sin
 - ii. Liberation from this oppression could come only from God
2. Jesus is a "Davidic Warrior"
 - i. The power of God is revealed in a baby in a manger
 - ii. The baby Jesus was "behind enemy lines" (C. S. Lewis)
3. Godly humility vs. worldly power
 - i. Worldly power: Quirinius, governor of Syria, and Caesar Augustus
 - ii. Heavenly power: the True Emperor, Jesus Christ
 - iii. The true emperor is not fed, but feeds (the Eucharist)

B. Dealing with the Enemies of Israel: Palm Sunday and Holy Week

1. Jesus took on "all forms of human dysfunction;" the sins of the world
2. He embodied the Sermon on the Mount while on the Cross

C. The Resurrection

1. Completed the first three tasks of the Messiah
2. The only good explanation for the early Christian movement, which logically should have died with Christ Jesus
3. Not a symbol, metaphor, or fable
4. "Shalom, peace:" Jesus shows his wounds to the disciples in the Upper Room

V. The Fourth Task: Reigning as Lord of the Nations

A. "*Iesus Kyrios*" ("Jesus is Lord")

1. Pilate, by putting the sign over the crucified Christ, was, ironically and unwittingly, the first evangelist
2. The words "Jesus is Lord" were fighting words in the first century, leading to direct confrontation with Rome and Caesar

B. However, it was through Rome that Christ and his Church would go out to all the world.

C. "Glad Tidings" was an imperial greeting; the good news (Gospel) was not about Roman rulers, but about the King of Kings

D. The Cross taunts Rome and its successors