

The Difference Between Jesus and James

“Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed.” ⁽¹⁾ The people in Nazareth witnessed Jesus’ childhood, his teenage years and his early adulthood. Now that Jesus has become famous throughout Israel, the citizens of Nazareth are amazed not so much by the miracles and teaching, but by his identity. *“Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?...Isn’t this the carpenter’s son? Isn’t his mother’s name Mary, and aren’t his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? Aren’t all his sisters with us?...And they took offense at him.”* ⁽²⁾

The people of Nazareth did not understand the difference between Jesus and James. Jesus appeared to be no different than any other human and certainly could not be divine.

As we approach the Christmas season let’s consider the differences that set apart Jesus as a totally unique human capable of being called the Savior of the world!

James—Only a Son of Man; Jesus—Both Son of Man and Son of God

Jesus was the Son of God, but his humanity was absolutely genuine. Being the Son of God didn’t diminish Jesus’ humanness. In fact, Jesus referred to himself as *son of man* eighty-eight times. Why so often? Because he wanted to stress his membership in the human race.

Luke was a physician. ⁽³⁾ His genealogical record of Jesus, reaches back to Adam. Notice the last statement of Luke’s genealogy of Jesus: *“The son of Adam, the son of God.”* ⁽⁴⁾ So Jesus’s humanity was as real as that of Adam and all Adam’s descendants.

James and Jesus’ other brothers and sisters, were truly children of Joseph and Mary. They were all born after Jesus. But here is the big difference between Jesus and his siblings. Jesus was not the son of Joseph, but the Son of God. Doctor Luke puts it this way:

“You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will...be called the Son of the Most High.” ⁽⁵⁾

“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy One to be born will be called the Son of God.” ⁽⁶⁾

James—Born with a Sinful Human Nature; Jesus—Born with a Sinless Human Nature

Our sinless Creator makes nothing that is sinful. Consequently, Adam and Eve came into existence with a sinless human nature. The effects of sin didn't exist in their world, their environment. The Spirit of God, Adam, and Eve freely interacted, communed and fellowshiped. They enjoyed one another!

But when Adam and Eve rebelled against the Lord by considering their words superior to his, sin entered them and the Spirit of God departed. In an instant they became humans filled with sinful tendencies. From then on all Adam's descendants shared his sinful human nature.

Adam was God's son by creation; Jesus was God's son by conception and birth. Both Adam and Jesus began life without any trace of sinfulness in their nature. Regrettably, Adam abandoned his sinlessness in order to set himself above his Creator. Jesus, on the other hand, faced every imaginable enticement to sin without yielding even for a moment. Adam died a sinner; Jesus died sinless. But more than that, Jesus was both God and man. After his resurrection Jesus' Spirit became universally present. When sinners submit to Jesus' lordship his Spirit moves into them and shares his victorious life with them.

James Died Because of Sins Effect; Jesus Died to Rescue Humanity From the Effect of Sin

"In Adam all die" ⁽⁷⁾ since everyone inherits Adam's sinfulness. Rebellion against the Lord initiated the processes that bring about deterioration of our bodies. This deterioration ultimately leads to the body's cessation of life. Therefore, Paul's comment, *"In Adam all die"* ⁽⁸⁾ concisely describes humanity's predicament—inability to escape eventual death.

But it was different with Jesus. His heavenly Father's sinless nature imparted sinlessness to Jesus. He was capable of being put to death, but not for his own sin, because there was none.

The Son of God's sinless humanity qualified him to pay our penalty without sharing our sinfulness! Since the human Jesus always yielded himself to heavenly Father's Word and will, he reached the end of life unspotted by sin and untainted by evil.

James died because of the effect of his own sin. Jesus died because of humanity's sinfulness. Jesus surrendered himself to human hatred, mistreatment and unimaginable torture in order to rescue everyone who surrenders to his lordship.

True, the physical bodies of Jesus' followers perish and are buried. But our Spirits, step out of our bodies at the moment it dies. An angelic escort carries our human spirit into the Lord's presence where we begin enjoying the eternal life

God envisioned for his children. Eventually the day arrives when the exalted Son of God *“will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise.”* ⁹⁾ Through the resurrection of our bodies we shed the last vestige of Adam’s failure and take on Jesus’ glorious, eternal victory!

We were made to win!

Footnote:

1. Matthew 13:54
2. Matthew 13:54-57
3. Colossians 4:14
4. Luke 3:38
5. Luke 1:31-32
6. Luke 1:35
7. 1 Corinthians 15:22
8. Ibid
9. 1 Thessalonians 4:16