WHO IS JESUS?

KAI: Hey, Libby. What's up?

LIBBY: Hey. You know, there's so much artwork about Jesus over the centuries. Do you think He looked like headshot Jesus?

KAI: I don't know. What about superhero Jesus? Or my personal favorite, touchdown Jesus?

LIBBY: Yeah. But, what did He really look like? Maybe, we need to start with who Jesus really is.

KAI: Yeah. Who is Jesus?

CATHOLIC CENTRAL OPENING TITLES

LIBBY: Hi. I'm Libby.

KAI: I'm Kai. Welcome to Catholic Central. Today, we're talking about Jesus.

LIBBY: Who is He?

KAI: Did He really exist?

LIBBY: Was He just a prophet?

KAI: Was He God?

LIBBY: Did He rise from the dead?

KAI: Is it possible to have a personal relationship with someone who lived 2,000 years ago?

LIBBY: First things first, did Jesus actually exist?

KAI: Pretty much everyone says yes. Bart D. Ehrman, an agnostic and esteemed expert on The New Testament, writes that, "The view that Jesus existed is held by virtually every expert on the planet."

LIBBY: The main source of knowledge on Jesus' life comes from the remarkably consistent resources of The New Testament. But, there are also Jewish sources, such as Josephus, and Roman ones, such as Tacitus.

KAI: According to historians, there's a lot we do know about Jesus. For example: Jesus was Jewish, came from an obscure town in Judea, was baptized by John the Baptist, and crucified by Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea sometime during the reign of Tiberius Caesar, the Roman emperor.

LIBBY: Fun fact, some say there's more evidence for the historical existence of Jesus than for many other ancient historical figures like, say, Plato or Alexander the Great.

KAI: Historical and archeological data can help us understand what happened to Jesus and why, but it's the testimony of 2,000 years of people of faith that can help us understand His religious significance.

LIBBY: First of all, Jesus claimed to be God. He was the Word that became flesh and dwelled among us, otherwise known as the Incarnation. The name of Jesus means “God saves.”

KAI: Looking at the historical facts, Jesus was sentenced to death for political reasons, but Christians believed that He died willingly in order to prove the complete and total love God has for us.

LIBBY: Jesus claim that He came to free mankind from its bondage to sin. Christians understand Him to be both fully human and fully God, the bridge between humanity and God.

SKEPTICAL

LIBBY: Wait, just because someone says they're God or the Messiah doesn't make them one, as evidenced by my crazy Uncle Bill.

LIBBY: Good point. But, were the details of your crazy Uncle Bill's life foretold in hundreds of prophecies?

SKEPTICAL

LIBBY: No. I get the impression he was more of a surprise.

KAI: When you consider the cultural context that Jesus came from, you can imagine how bizarre his claim sounded both to the Jewish people and to the Roman authorities.

LIBBY: And dangerous too. It was totally blasphemous for anyone to claim to be God, and blasphemy brought the death penalty.

KAI: When they heard Jesus saying things like "Before Abraham was, I am" and "I and the Father are one", they heard those as pretty explicit claims to be God, and they tried to stone Him for it.

LIBBY: Interesting side note, no other leader of a major world religion ever claimed to be God incarnate.

KAI: This makes Jesus unique in the history of world religions.

LIBBY: Well, that, and the claim by Him and His followers that He died, was buried and rose from the dead three days later.

KAI: That brings us to The Resurrection ...

LIBBY: The Resurrection.

KAI: You're a better singer than I am. Surely, the biggest difference between Jesus Christ and all other religious leaders, actually all other people ever, anywhere, ever, is the belief that this guy rose from the dead.

SKEPTICAL

LIBBY: Hold on. I wasn't there. I didn't see it with my own eyes, and history can't prove it. How am I supposed to believe it?

KAI: Well, for one, there are hundreds of eyewitnesses that saw the risen Christ. They risked their lives to stand by this claim.

LIBBY: While people of many different faiths consider Him to be a great teacher, inspiring leader and an all-around nice guy, the Incarnation and Resurrection are what make Him much more than that for Christians.

KAI: This “claiming to be God” stuff has caused quite a few headaches over the years. As the great Christian writer C.S. Lewis famously pointed out, anyone who claims to be fully God is a lunatic, or they are knowingly trying to scam people, which makes them a liar.

LIBBY: Neither of these is consistent with being a good teacher or a nice guy. Since Jesus is clearly neither a lunatic nor a liar, He is truly Lord, the Son of God.

KAI: The humanity and divinity of Jesus united in one body is what the Church calls the hypostatic union. Throughout the years, many heresies have spun from attempts to explain the relationship of these human and divine natures in Jesus. Heresy, FYI, is doubting part of the Christian faith while still calling yourself a Christian.

LIBBY: Let's see. There's Nestorianism.

KAI: Which claimed that the human Christ was born in union with, but separate from, God.

LIBBY: Adoptionism.

KAI: Which held that Jesus was born a normal human but given supernatural powers and adopted as the son of God after proving His devotion to God's will.

LIBBY: Then there's Docetism, which thought that matter was evil, therefore Jesus' body was only an illusion.

KAI: On the other hand, there's Arianism.

LIBBY: Where Jesus is divine, but something God the Father created and therefore is subordinate to Him.

KAI: Monophysitism.

LIBBY: Which taught that Jesus was human, until He got replaced by a divine nature.

KAI: In the end, for hundreds of years, the Catholic Church has affirmed that Jesus is the Word of God and has assisted as one of the persons of the Trinity for all time, with two distinct natures in one: fully human and fully divine.

LIBBY: This might all sound technical, but it's really important. If Jesus is only human, He has no real moral authority and was lying when He talked about forgiving sins. If He's only God and not human, His death and resurrection are meaningless. It was just a show and not real suffering.

KAI: That brings us to the question: how and why do Catholics think it's possible to have a real and dynamic relationship with someone who lived 2,000 years ago?

LIBBY: The simple answer is the fullness of life they find in Christ.

KAI: Catholics believe that Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to make Himself present in our lives today. For Catholics, Christ reveals our true selves by showing that all of us are completely and unconditionally loved and that transformation is possible.

LIBBY: All of us have wounds, and Catholics believe we can all find in Jesus something that we need in order to be whole. If you feel hopeless, you can seek out His love and mercy.

KAI: If you feel haunted by shame, look for Jesus to forgive you and transform you.

LIBBY: If you struggle with compulsion or addiction, Christ may be a liberator, someone who conquered the ultimate enemy, death.

KAI: If you think that Christianity is only for the meek, look to the revolutionary Jesus, who challenged social norms and scandalized people with what He did and said.

LIBBY: Catholics also believe Jesus is present in the word of Scripture and in the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist.

KAI: The Church teaches that having a relationship with Christ means imitating the love He shows us as best we can.

LIBBY: As humans, we fail, but the beautiful thing about what Catholics believe is that Christ still loves us, even in our failures.

KAI: As we get closer to Jesus, we get closer to who we truly are. For Catholic Central, I am Kai.

LIBBY: I'm Libby. Thanks for watching.

KAI: Have you decided which picture is your favorite?

LIBBY: Yeah. I think I like rock-and-roll Jesus the best. He has kind eyes.

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