Strange Facts

What Is It about Jesus?

Last week I looked out my office window and saw a young woman taking pictures of our church building. I thought that was fascinating as it isn't like it is a historical monument or a building of great beauty. Going outside I approached the woman and her mom and they recognized me immediately. It turned out the woman as a child used to attend our children's ministry twenty years ago and because she lived in Brooklyn now and had a job there, she decided on her trip to see her mom to take pictures of important places in her life and our church education building was one of them. When the young woman told me of her history with our church, I immediately knew who she was but before that I had no idea who was talking with me. Perhaps you have had times where someone approached you who knew who you were, but you did not know who the other person was. That happened with Jesus. Nearly everyone He came upon had no idea who He was, but Jesus knew them all. Our text makes this clear that Jesus was not recognized by nearly anyone who met Him for the first time. **The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.** (John 1 :9-13 NIV) This is the Big Idea we will be exploring. Today is the day to receive Jesus Christ and let His light shine in you.

The Greek term "kosmos" is used in a variety of ways in the Gospel of John as well as the rest of the New Testament. Sometimes it describes the universe, other times the earth itself and often everything living on the earth. Here however and as is often the case in John, it speaks of the unbelieving people Christ Himself has made. The Bible makes the stunning declaration that when Jesus lived in this kosmos, He not only was not received by the kosmos, but He wasn't even recognized by the kosmos. It is perhaps odd to those who do not know the full story that the Creator of all things came into His creation in such a way that the ones He created didn't know who He was. He did not make a big scene but was born just like the rest of us as an infant and then by natural steps grew up and became a man. That is not how god fables are put together but the truth is just how it is and not developed in legendary form. Jesus, God in flesh was not beloved and in the end hated by many. I have often wondered why Jesus is rejected by so many. Is it the rules found in the Bible? That seems odd as rules are everywhere from how a basketball game is to be played to how you are to drive. Perhaps it is the authority Jesus has. Yet, authority is a part of life. In a sense, parents rule over their children, judges rule over the courts and dictators like Putin rule over countries. Is it something more theological such as His control over who has eternal life? Maybe it is just jealousy over how good Jesus Christ was. We find jealousy in every nook and cranny of society. Athletes are jealous of other athletes, scientists are jealous of the accomplishments of other scientists, and parents often are jealous of other parents and the success of their kids.

Why is it that so many not only ignore Jesus, but many even hate Him? Recently a church in Nigeria was destroyed and many Christians massacred because of the hatred the murderers had for Jesus. It really is quite bizarre if you give it much thought, the loathing so many Jews had for Jesus that led to the call of the crowd to crucify Him. What had He done to any of them? Perhaps the Jewish religious leaders, jealous of Jesus' popularity, egged on the crowd to scream out to Pilate to crucify Jesus. We may not know why but it is clear that most people do not receive Jesus and have never recognized Him as creator and Lord over the universe. There is not a rational explanation to why so many turn on Jesus and even concoct crazy theories such as evolution to justify their belief in a godless universe. It would seem that the root of atheism and the rejection of Jesus as Savior is supernatural in nature. It is not generated by human thinking alone because it makes no sense, the rejection of Jesus. Now let us consider the opposite reaction to Jesus Christ, one perhaps you have had.

Not everyone rejects Jesus. In fact many realize that He is the Savior of the world and the one who alone provides eternal life. The reaction of Andrew, one of the first disciples is much like so many. **Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ).** (John 1: 40-41 NIV) What happens when you realize God is God is a supernatural transformation that takes place that cannot really be explained in natural terminology. It is much bigger than a change of mind or a new approach to life. It is something far more expansive and complex than that. Here is the exact wording the Bible uses to point to it. **Yet to all who**

received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. (John 1: 12-13 NIV)

Let me share a few examples from before the birth of Christ and the Word becoming flesh of what Is being indicated. The Lord called Samson to be His man of the hour. From before he was conceived, the Lord made it clear that Samson was to be special and do a great work in Israel. Everything about him was quite normal other than an angel meeting with his parents and telling them how he was to be raised. But then the Lord brought supernatural transformation to Samson's life. **Samson went down to Timnah together with his father and mother. As they approached the vineyards of Timnah, suddenly a young lion came roaring toward him. The Spirit of the Lord came upon him in power so that he tore the lion apart with his bare hands as he might have torn a young goat. But he told neither his father nor his mother what he had done**. (Judges 14: 5-6 NIV) This great strength Samson gained happened when "**The Spirit of the Lord came upon him in power**…" Another example of supernatural transformation, one perhaps a bit less dramatic, happened with Saul after he was anointed by God's prophet Samuel to be king of Israel. When Samuel first approached Saul about becoming king, Saul argued against it, insisting he was a nobody. Later when it was time for Saul to be introduced to the people of Israel, he hid away from everyone, not wanting to be seen. Yet then the Spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard of the atrocities the Ammonites threatened against one of the towns in Israel, a transformation of his personality occurred. **When Saul heard their words, the Spirit of God came upon him in power, and he burned with anger. He took a pair of oxen, cut them into pieces, and sent the pieces by messengers throughout Israel, proclaiming, "This is what will be done to the oxen of anyone who does not follow Saul and Samuel." Then the terror of the Lord fell on the people, and they turned out as one man.** (1 Samuel 11: 6-7 NIV) No longer was Saul a timid, unassuming child of a man, now he was as bold as a lion. Transormation, at the supernatural level, is amazing and a wonder. Daniel and his three friends experienced this after they refused to eat the unclean food the king of Babylon required they eat to prepare them for serving in his court. Despite the fact that they risked their lives to refuse the king's orders, it turned out that they were healthier and ten times as wise as any of the other young men the king had trained for service in his court. **To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds. At the end of the time set by the king to bring them in, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's service. In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom.** (Daniel 1: 17-20 NIV)

The supernatural effect being born again has on you is real. You are born of God and that transforms your personality and alters completely what you are capable of doing. The Holy Spirit then lives in you and that is transformative. Paul hated Christians and Christianity and yet He met Jesus and was born again. Paul became the greatest and most ardent Christian ever perhaps, all because of the transformation that took place when he was born again. One of my favorite authors is C.S. Lewis. We read his set of seven fantasy books to our children multiple times. His insights into Christianity are simply astounding. But as a college student he was an atheist. His mother died when he was nine and he could not believe a real God would allow that and his teacher through high school was an atheist who shaped his view of the world. Yet when he was a young college professor he was born again, and Christ became a part of his life. How is it that an atheist could write some of the most important Christian books ever? God transformed him when he received Christ. Our big idea is crucial to see. Today is the day to receive Jesus Christ and let His light shine in you. As you put your hope in Christ for every part of your life, you will discover the power of God living in you. Trust Him to transform you and make you perfect and He will. Today is the day of salvation. And it continues forever.