



# Worship: Foundations

## JESUS – THE VIDEOS

### Part 3 – How do we know about Jesus?

The video by Revd Dr Calvin Samuel, which lasts 12½ minutes, can be found here:

<https://vimeo.com/248150648>

#### Outline:

In this video, Calvin Samuel suggests that we mostly know about Jesus through the Bible, especially the gospels and epistles. He acknowledges that the four gospels don't overlap completely and that there are sometimes points of divergence and apparent contradiction between them. They are theological, rather than primarily historical, documents.

What we have are four different (literary) 'portraits' of Jesus by highly skilled theological artists (the gospel writers), each painting a portrait of the Jesus they have come to know. Calvin Samuel encourages us to read the four gospels side by side.

If something occurs in *all* the gospels, then it will probably be highly important. But, even if it occurs in just one gospel, it's likely the writer is highlighting a particular theological truth worth noticing. Although it is true that the gospels are timeless documents that will continue to be read, they are also rooted in a particular context, culture and space, which we will need to unpack.

If you want to explore further the idea that the gospel writers present four 'portraits' of Jesus, take a look sometime at this video (<https://youtu.be/LFViTo7x6p4>) in which Professor Richard Burridge talks about his book, *Four Gospels, One Jesus?* (William B Eerdmans Publishing Co, 3rd edition, 2014), which has partly inspired Calvin Samuel's thinking.

#### Reflection:

Imagine a friend puts you on the spot and asks you how you can know anything reliable about Jesus, given that the gospels are full of disagreement and contradiction. How would you reply?

Visit the National Portrait Gallery website (<https://www.npg.org.uk/>) and use the search facility to find different portraits of the same individual (eg, former Archbishop of Canterbury, [Rowan Williams](#), or [Queen Elizabeth II](#), or the actor, [Judi Dench](#)). How true do you think these different portraits are to the people portrayed? How helpful is it, do you think, to treat the gospels as different (literary) portraits of Jesus?