

Who are you?



If you're looking for something a bit more substantial to think about then this is for you! Based on Episode 1 of the first series of Doctor Who, featuring Christopher Ecclestone as the ninth Doctor, this reflection leads us to consider who Jesus is!

In other words this theological reflection isn't about the Doctor—it's about Jesus!

'So what you're saying is that the whole world revolves around you?'

(Rose Tyler to the Doctor, Episode 1, Series 1)

It's 7:30 a.m. and Rose stumbles out of bed! It's an ordinary day! The rush hour rushes on with its own life and carelessness: cars carry on, people race to get to where they're going and, when they get there, fall into the daily round of doing what they have to do! The break comes with lunch and food and fooling around and then back to work, back to the dressed up dummies in the Department Store, the heart beat of commercialism. There's nothing different about today. Life carries on with its own monotony.

The real action begins in the basement, the underbelly of the store, where the dummies are stripped of their fashionable accessories, and we see things as they really are. Whilst Rose meanders through the corridors looking to pay her lottery money (with the hope of something more!) she discovers something's not quite right! The dummies are moving! They're alive - and they aren't particularly friendly!

And from the shadows emerges a mysterious figure! 'Run for your life!' he tells her! And who wouldn't! Rose escapes to the street, whilst the store explodes behind her! Not the ending to the day Rose had expected!

Yet even when Rose experiences this out of the ordinary event she still finds it difficult to turn away from the rhythm of her life and the alarm still stirs her next morning at 7.30! 'There's no point in getting up, sweetheart!' shouts her mother, 'You got no job to go to!' Not even a mind-blowing experience and a mysterious figure emerging from nowhere can stir this young woman from what she knows. She is comfortable with the familiar!

Her boyfriend still wants to go to the pub to watch the footy, and her mother thinks she should claim for compensation! Life carries on. 'There's always Finch's,' says her mother, 'they've always got jobs going.' 'The butchers?' replies Rose, unimpressed.

And so as the Doctor unravels the meaning of the events, he has to raise Rose's mind and remind her that 'This isn't a price war!' Her mind is still on shopping and work. 'You lot. All you do is eat chips, watch TV, and go to bed!' is the way the Doctor sums up her life and the life of everyone else that inhabits the planet.

But with the Doctor, her perspective is beginning to change. She is curious about this figure. Who is he, this... Doctor? She goes on a quest, a search for meaning, trying to discover the truth. And so her curiosity (and a quick internet search) carries her to Clive, a stranger in his garden shed! 'The Doctor,' he says, 'is a legend woven through history. When disaster comes,

he's there. And he has one constant companion: death. If the Doctor's back one thing is for certain: we're all in danger.'

Yet even when she confronts the Doctor about who he is, he remains enigmatic. 'Really though Doctor, tell me. Who are you?' He is be-

yond her grasp, outside of her experience, and he gives no straight answers. He takes her hand. 'I can feel it. The turn of the earth, the ground beneath our feet, spinning at a thousand miles an hour, and the entire planet is hurtling around the sun at 67,00 miles an hour. And I can feel it. We're falling through space, you and me, clinging to the skin of this tiny little world, and if we let go...that's who I am.' And then walks off!

'So suddenly the world revolves around you?' re-monstrates the Doctor. And after a few explanations,

**'So suddenly
the world revolves
around you?'**

Rose asks the question in reverse, "So the world revolves around you then?" In characteristic fashion the answer is, 'Sort of, yeh.' There are times when we think the world revolves around us and we seek salvation in things that only bring short-lived pleasures.

There is so much that threatens to replace our need for God. In Episode 1, commercialism becomes the enemy, as plastic dummies are sabotaged and turn against us.

Later in the same episode, Rose and the Doctor stand on the banks of the Thames with the Millenium Eye in the background, searching for a transmitter. In a clever camera shot we see in his haloed head a glimpse of something more and are given an idea of his significance. His own quest is fired by a belief in the worth of the people he is trying to save. 'This planet is just starting. These stupid little people have only just learned how to walk, but they're capable of so much more.' He sees beyond the monotony, and glimpses the great potential. He even tells the enemy figure of the Great Consciousness who has come to feed off the world, 'I'm not your enemy – I'm here to help.'

And so to Jesus, whose coming has been prophesied and prepared, and whose presence startles and astounds. The Gospel accounts of Jesus show us a person who is at times both plain talking and enigmatic. And even when he does talk plainly his listeners often fail to get the point. Jesus never feels forced to give straight answers – his turn of phrase is often more profound, and so many people are left wondering who he is.

Some have made that journey of discovery and, like Simon Peter, realised he is 'the Messiah, the Son of living God' (*Matthew 16:16*). There are others, too, who come with secret searchings, people like Nicodemus, visiting Jesus by night, looking for answers to enlighten (*John 3*). And then there are the occasions when people try to catch Jesus out - yet he so easily slips away from them: physically yes, like the time he slips through the crowds (*John 10:39*) but he also slips away from their word games, refusing to be caught out. Yes, Jesus is elusive at times. Even his own mother cannot

work things out, confused even by the words of her son at the age of twelve: 'Why did you search for me?' he said. 'Did you not know that I was bound to be in my Father's house?' (*Luke 2:49*) Then there are the times

when he refuses to answer the questions and refers them to his actions.

'Tell us plainly are you the Messiah?' His response? 'I have told you and you do not believe. My deeds done in my Father's name are my credentials' (*John 10:24-25*).

Jesus is certainly the one who turns people's lives around, and enables them to see things from a different perspective. The one who enables people to turn out and away from the self centred lives we so often live to one that revolves round him, the Way, the Truth and the Life (*John 14: 6*).

When the Doctor holds Rose's hand and says, 'I can feel it. The turn of the earth, the ground beneath our feet, spinning at a thousand miles an hour, and the entire planet is hurtling around the sun at 67,00 miles an hour. And I can feel it. We're falling through space, you and me, clinging to the skin of this tiny little world, and if we let go...that's who I am' can we fail to think about Christ who has existed from the beginning, the Alpha and the Omega, the one who was present at the creation of the world, the one who is the creative word the Father speaks to brings all things into existence? After being questioned by the Jews, 'Are you greater than our father Abraham? Who do you claim to be?' Jesus' answer is enigmatic yet direct. 'Before Abraham was born, I am' (*John 8: 58*). Jesus' domain is the whole cosmos. It's through him and for him that the whole universe was created (*Colossians 1:13-20*).

And it's with this coming into the world that Jesus witnesses our own worth. 'These people,' says the Doctor, 'they're capable of so much more.' Jesus trusts

'Before Abraham was born, I am'

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in us, and makes the journey to be with the people who are his own, and who are worth so much more. 'He was in the form of God; yet he laid no claim to equality with God, but made himself nothing, assuming the form of a slave. Bearing the human likeness, sharing the human lot, he humbled himself and was obedient even to the point of death, death on a cross' (*Philippians 2:6 – 8*). Christ has come to the rescue and it comes at a cost.

Clive the stranger warns Rose that the Doctor's one constant companion is death. For Jesus, death hangs over him, an inevitable conclusion that comes from so much loving. From the moment he is visited by the Magi with the gift of Myrrh (*Matthew 2:11*), to the prophecy of a sword piercing Mary's heart (*Luke 2:34-35*) and the constant references to his own death and his facing up to Jerusalem, the cross is never far away. Yes, death is his constant companion. Yet, Jesus changes our perspective on even that. Through his death he demonstrates his love and so our worth. Through his death he makes it possible for us to live. And through his death he takes our lives to a new level, as we are raised up to live with him forever. 'Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, in order that everyone who has faith may in him have eternal life' (*John 3:14-15*).

'Lord, to whom shall we go?'

The question remains: are you coming or staying? It's the same invitation. So Jesus asked the Twelve, 'Do you also want to leave?' Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord to whom shall we go? Your words are words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.' (*John 6:67 –68*)

'You could come with me,' invites the Doctor.

'Is it always this dangerous?' asks Rose.

'Yeh'

After some thought, Rose runs to the Doctor, armed with the spirit of adventure to discover new worlds and new ways of living with the one who comes to save. She decides to leave behind her old way of life. She still eats chips! She can still enjoy those things and love the people she has always loved. But now she has a

new perspective on the world, she is beginning to see things differently as the Doctor turns her world upside down.

Meanwhile, in the real world, we are faced with Jesus who gets us to see things differently. He invites us to follow, though the choice is ours. He invites us on a journey of discovery: discovering who he is and who we are. He invites us to a life with the One who saves and in whom we can place our trust.

For Discussion and Reflection

Are there times when you get frustrated by the monotony of life? How do you make sense of the world? How does Jesus change your perspective on life?

Are there times in your life when Jesus is elusive? How does that make you feel?

Are there things that really confuse you?

Who is Jesus for you? How has your knowledge of Jesus changed? How has your relationship with Jesus changed over the years? Where or how do you discover more about him?

Has there been a time when you have made a conscious choice to follow Jesus? Have you ever thought twice about following him? What has being a disciple of Jesus cost you?

Look up some of the Bible passages mentioned in this chapter. What different things do they tell you about Jesus?

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