

DISCOVERING CHRIST

Lesson 1 — Who Is Jesus?

The Big Question: Who does the Bible say Jesus really is?

Purpose of This Study

Before we talk about salvation, baptism, repentance, or what a person must do, we need to answer a more fundamental question: **Who is Jesus?**

If Jesus is merely a good teacher, then our response to Him is one thing.

If Jesus is the Son of God, Lord, Creator, and Savior, then our response to Him becomes the most important decision we can make.

This study is an invitation to let **the Bible speak for itself about Jesus.**

1. DISCUSSION STARTER

“How Do We Know Who Someone Really Is?”

Question: Think about someone you know—or perhaps someone you have heard about—who turned out to be very different from what you initially thought. What caused you to change your opinion of that person?

Observation: An interesting thing about people, we can have opinions about someone without really knowing that person. The same thing can happen with Jesus.

Most people have some opinion about Jesus. Some think He was a good man. Some think He was a prophet. Some think He was a great teacher. Some believe He was the Son of God. But in this study, we're not going to begin with what *we* think about Jesus. We're going to ask a more important question: **What does the Bible say about Him?**

2. JESUS — MORE THAN A MAN

Before Reading Question: As we read this passage, listen for what John says about Jesus' identity. What does John want us to understand about Him?

Now Read John 1:1–18

Discussion Questions

1. In verse 1, what three things does John say about “the Word”?
2. What do you think John means when he says, “**the Word was God**”?
3. According to verse 3, what role did the Word have in creation?
4. What does verse 4 say was in Him?
5. In verses 6–8, John the Baptist is introduced. What distinction does John make between John the Baptist and Jesus?
6. Look at verse 14. What does it mean that “**the Word became flesh**”?
7. What does this tell us about Jesus' relationship to humanity?
8. According to verse 18, what has Jesus made known to us?

Digging Deeper

If John 1 is true, how should we think differently about the baby in Bethlehem?

Jesus didn't begin existing when He was born in Bethlehem. He entered the world as a human being, but John presents Him as existing **before creation itself**.

Key Thought: Jesus is not merely someone who came from God. John says that Jesus was with God and was God, and that He entered our world as a human being.

3. WHAT DID JESUS SAY ABOUT HIMSELF?

Read John 8:23–24

What does Jesus say about Himself in these verses?

Questions

1. Jesus says, **“I am from above.”** What distinction is He making?
2. What does He mean by saying, **“unless you believe that I am he, you will indeed die in your sins”**?
3. Why would Jesus connect believing in His identity with the issue of sin?
4. What does this tell us about how important the question **“Who is Jesus?”** really is?

Helpful Observation: Jesus doesn't present Himself as someone who merely has good advice. He makes a claim about His **identity**. And if His claim is true, then ignoring Him isn't simply rejecting someone's opinion—it is rejecting the One who came from God.

4. “WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?”

Read Matthew 16:13–17

Jesus asks His disciples two questions.

Question #1: “Who do people say the Son of Man is?”

Question #2: “But what about you? Who do you say that I am?”

Discussion Questions

1. What answers did the disciples give to Jesus' first question?
2. What do these answers tell us about the different opinions people had about Jesus?
3. Why do you think Jesus asked the disciples what **other people** were saying before asking what **they** believed?
4. What was Peter's answer?
5. What does Peter mean by **“the Messiah, the Son of the living God”**?
6. According to verse 17, where did Peter's understanding ultimately come from?

Notice something important. Jesus didn't ask Peter, "What does your family believe about Me?" He didn't ask, "What does your culture say about Me?" He asked, "Who do you say that I am?"

Eventually, every person has to answer that question for himself or herself.

Personal Question: If Jesus were sitting across the table from you tonight and asked, "Who do you say that I am?" what would you say? Don't feel badly if you answer: "I'm still trying to figure that out." That's actually an excellent place for someone seeking to know the truth about Jesus.

5. JESUS AND THE FATHER

Look at a statement Jesus made that caused a very strong reaction from the people around Him. Read John 10:30–33

Questions

1. What does Jesus say in verse 30?
2. How did the Jews respond?
3. According to verse 33, why did they want to stone Him?
4. Were they misunderstanding Jesus as merely claiming to be a good teacher?
5. What does their reaction tell us about how they understood Jesus' statement?

Important Point

We need to be careful here. The statement **"I and the Father are one"** does not mean Jesus was claiming to be the Father. The New Testament distinguishes the Father and the Son. But Jesus was making an extraordinary claim about His unity with the Father. That is why the question of Jesus' identity cannot be treated as a minor theological detail.

6. JESUS — CREATOR AND LORD

We have seen what John says about Jesus. We have heard what Jesus says about Himself. Now let's listen to Paul describe Jesus. As we read, listen for everything Paul says Jesus has done and everything he says Jesus is.

Read Colossians 1:15–20

Discussion Questions

1. In verse 15, how does Paul describe Jesus?
2. What does **"firstborn over all creation"** mean in the context of the following verses?
3. According to verse 16, what was created through Christ?
4. What does that tell us about Christ's relationship to creation?
5. What does verse 17 say about Christ's existence?
6. What does Paul mean when he says, **"in him all things hold together"**?
7. According to verse 18, what is Christ's relationship to the church?

8. What does verse 18 say about Christ's position?
9. According to verse 19, what was pleased to dwell in Christ?
10. How does verse 20 begin moving us toward the subject of salvation?

Look at the Whole Picture

John 1

- He was in the beginning.
- He was with God.
- He was God.
- All things were created through Him.
- He became flesh.

John 8

- He came from above.
- Believing in Him is connected with salvation from sin.

Matthew 16

- He is the Messiah.
- He is the Son of the living God.

John 10

- He is one with the Father.

Colossians 1

- He is before creation.
- All things were created through Him.
- All things hold together in Him.
- He is head of the church.
- The fullness of God dwells in Him.

What kind of person is this?

7. WHY DOES JESUS' IDENTITY MATTER?

Questions of Personal Interest:

1. If Jesus were simply a great moral teacher, how should we respond to Him?
 2. If Jesus is truly the Son of God, how should we respond differently?
 3. If Jesus is Creator and Lord, what authority does He have over our lives?
 4. Why is it impossible to have a meaningful discussion about salvation without first understanding who Jesus is?
 5. Why do you think Christianity places so much emphasis on Jesus rather than simply on following a set of moral rules?
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8. THE JESUS QUESTION

Return to Matthew 16:15. Read it again: **“But what about you? Who do you say I am?”** What have you learned about Jesus tonight? Has anything we studied tonight changed or challenged the way you think about Jesus?

9. PERSONAL REFLECTION

Think About It Moments for Later. Later when you are alone answer honestly these questions to yourself:

1. Before tonight, what did I believe about Jesus?
 2. What did I learn tonight that was new or especially meaningful?
 3. Is there anything about Jesus that I am still unsure about?
 4. Do I believe Jesus is the Son of God? Why or why not?
 5. If Jesus really is who these passages say He is, what should a person do about it?
- Don't try to answer #5 completely yet. That question becomes the doorway into the next several studies.
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10. CLOSING THOUGHT

Tonight we haven't talked much about what we need to do to become Christians. That's intentional. Before we can understand what Jesus wants us to do, we need to understand **who Jesus is**. The Bible presents Him as far more than a good man or a great teacher.

He is the Word who became flesh.

He is the Son of God.

He is the Messiah.

He is the Creator.

He is Lord.

And if that is true, then the question isn't simply, **"What do I think about Jesus?"**

The greater question is: **"What will I do with Jesus?"**

That's where our journey together will take us.
