

## Who Do You Think I am?

### “Who do you say that I am?”

With that brief question Jesus Christ confronted His followers with the most important question ever asked. They would never face any more important issue in life. Jesus had spent a lot of time with them and made some bold claims about who He was and the authority He had. Now the time had come for them to either believe or deny His teachings.

Who do you say Jesus Christ is? Your response to Him will determine your eternal existence. Consider for a moment what the Bible claims about Him.

### Jesus Christ is God

While Jesus was on earth there was much confusion about who He was. Some thought He was a wise teacher or a great prophet. According to Matthew 16, Jesus asked His disciples “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” Their answers were flattering but wrong. Still others did not care or could not decide. But Jesus said, “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30). That means Jesus Himself claimed to be nothing less than God in human flesh.

Many people today do not understand that Jesus claimed to be God. They are content to think of Him as little more than a great moral teacher. But even His enemies understood His claims to deity. In fact, that is why they tried with all their might to put Him to death by stoning Him (John 5:18; 10:33) and eventually by the Father’s plan and will to crucify Him (John 19:7).

C.S. Lewis observed, “You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and call Him a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to” (Mere Christianity [Macmillan, 1952], pp. 40-41). Quite simply, if the biblical claims are true, He is God!

### Jesus Christ is Holy

The Scriptures say that Jesus is absolutely and perfectly holy. Isaiah 6:3 tells us “And one called out to another and said, “Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory.” It is important to note that because He is holy He cannot commit or approve of evil (James 1:13).

As God, Jesus embodied every element of God’s character. Colossians 2:9 tells us, “in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form.” He was perfectly holy “For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are*, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). Scripture also reveals something else about Him: even His enemies could not bring a true accusation against Him “**Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me?**” (John 8:46).

God requires holiness of us as well. First Peter 1:16 tells us, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”

Jesus Christ is Savior

Our failure to obey God (to be holy) places us in danger of eternal punishment. Second Thessalonians 1:9 says “And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.” Scripture reveals a shocking fact about all mankind; we cannot obey Him because we have neither the desire nor the ability to do so. According to Ephesians 2:1-3 we are prisoners to our own nature “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.” Notice we are characterized as “dead” in our “trespasses and sins.”

According to Scripture, everyone is guilty of sin: “There is no man who does not sin” (1 Kings 8:46); For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; And all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away” (Isaiah 64:6), “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). This Romans passage helps us to understand that sin (even one sin) makes us fall short of the perfect glory of God. Not only does the Bible claim that we fall short of God’s perfect and sinless glory, but we are incapable of changing our sinful condition. Jeremiah 13:23 says, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil.” These two examples imply that just as animals cannot change their nature, neither can we.

You might be asking, “What about all the good and kind acts I do?” The Bible does not deny that man can do good deeds. In fact every human being is created in the image of God. Therefore, man is capable of being actively involved in various religious and philanthropic activities. But we are incapable of understanding, loving, or pleasing God on our own. In other words, we are incapable of any true spiritual responsiveness. Paul gives us a rather disturbing character sketch of all mankind in Romans 3:10-12, “as it is written, “THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD; ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE.”

God’s holiness and justice demand that all sin be punished by death: “The soul who sins will die” (Ezekiel 18:4). This is hard for us to understand because we tend to evaluate our sins as less serious than others. However, the Bible teaches that all acts of sin are the result of sinful thinking and evil desires. That is why simply changing our patterns of behavior can not solve our sin problems or eliminate their consequences. We need to be changed inwardly so our thinking and desire are holy.

Jesus is the only One who can forgive and transform us, thereby delivering us from the power and penalty of sin: “There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved” Acts 4:12).

Even though God’s perfect justice demands death for sin, His love has provided a Savior, who paid the penalty and died for sinners: “Christ... died for sins once and for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God” (1 Pet. 3:18). Christ’s death satisfied the demands of God’s perfect justice, thereby enabling Him to forgive and save those who place their faith in Him (Romans 3:26). John 3:16 says, “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.” He alone is “our great God and Savior” (Titus 2:13).

Jesus is our only acceptable object of saving faith

Some people think it does not matter what you believe as long as you are sincere. But without a valid object to express your faith in your faith is useless.

If you take poison, thinking it's medicine, all the faith in the world will not restore your life. Similarly, if Jesus is the only source of salvation, and you are trusting in anyone or anything else for your salvation, your faith is meaningless.

Many people assume there are many paths to God and that each religion or denomination represents the truth. But Jesus warns us against such thinking when He said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me" (John 14:6). He did not claim to be one of many equally legitimate paths to God, or the way to God for His day only. He claimed to be the only way to God, then and forever.

Jesus is Lord

Contemporary thinking says that man is the product of evolution. But the Bible says that we were created by a personal God to love, serve, and enjoy endless fellowship with Him.

The New Testament reveals it was Jesus Himself who created everything (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16). Therefore, He also owns and rules everything (Psalm 103:19). That means He has authority over our lives and we owe Him absolute allegiance, obedience, and worship.

Romans 10:9 says, "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved." Confessing Jesus as Lord means humbly submitting to His authority (Philippians 2:10-11). Believing that God has raised Him from the dead involves trusting in His resurrection.

True faith is always accompanied by repentance from sin. Repentance is more than simply feeling sorry for sin. It is agreeing with God that you are sinful, confessing your sins to Him, and making a conscious choice to turn from sin and pursue holiness (Isaiah 55:7). Jesus said, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments" (John 14:15); and "If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine" (John 8:31).

It is not enough to believe certain facts about Christ. Even Satan and his demons believe in the true God and even shudder (James 2:19), but they did not love and obey Him. Their faith is not genuine. True saving faith always responds in obedience "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10).

Jesus is the sovereign Lord. When you obey Him you are acknowledging His lordship and submitting to His authority over your life. That does not mean that your obedience will always be perfect or we will eventually stop sinning (1 John 1:8), but that will be your heart's desire.

Jesus Christ is judge

All who reject Jesus as their Lord and Savior will one day face Him as their Judge: "God is now declaring to all men that all everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man who He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead" (Acts 17:30-31).