

“Who is Jesus?”

Easter 2019

Matthew 16:13-15 “13 When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?”14 So they said, “Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”15 He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”

This passage shows that there was a great deal of confusion in Jesus’ day about who He was.

Jesus has simply asked His disciples who people have concluded He is—and no one was quite sure!

Some said John the Baptist, others said the prophet Elijah, while still others thought that Jeremiah had come back to earth or one of the other OT prophets.

So Jesus’s identity was controversial...everyone had an opinion about Him.

And it is NO DIFFERENT today.

We are days away from the time of year when people all over the world will be confronted with Easter and the story of Jesus Christ—His birth, life, death, and His resurrection.

Millions will flock to church—many for the only time during the entire year.

Some will go to celebrate a resurrection they believe in, and others will go because that's just what you do at Easter time—you go to an Easter service.

And the secular, non-Christian slice of the population will either ignore it, or do what our own secular media so often do—put pictures of Jesus on their magazine covers, headlined with doubtful, skeptical titles about the whole Christian message, including Jesus Himself.

The headlines and portraits they choose will show a great variety of concepts and ideas about Who He is...

I looked a few of them up that have appeared over the past few decades:

One Newsweek cover read, "Rethinking the Resurrection: A new debate." Interpreted—did He really rise from the dead?

Another cover said, "The Radical Jesus: Five lessons from the original revolutionary." So Jesus was a revolutionary!

One Life magazine cover asked the question, "Who Was He? Solving the Mystery of Jesus."

A Newsmax cover wondered, "The Jesus Question: Will He Ever Return?"

Several of them were about SEARCHING for Jesus:

One Time Magazine cover said, "The Search for Jesus."

A Newsweek cover read, "Searching for the Real Jesus."

U.S. News and World Report said: "In Search of Jesus."

Another Time magazine Easter cover asked the million dollar question, "Why Did Jesus Have to Die?"

The bottom line is this: When Jesus asked His disciples, "Who do men say that I am? and got several responses, the same question today would produce an even greater variety of opinions.

Some would say He was a good teacher, a good man, a holy man, one of several equally important historic religious leaders—alongside Buddha, Confucius, Mohammad, and so on.

Some would go so far as to say He never really existed, that His disciples made it all up....He's a historic myth.

Still others would accuse Him of being a first century scam artist, that He was certainly not Who He said He was.

Now, I believe the most important question a person can ever answer is "Who was Jesus?"

Because the Bible says that every human being on earth will answer to God for what they did with Jesus!

Pilate asked the Jews at Jesus' trial, "What should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?" (Matt. 27:22 NLT).

That is the question of the hour! What should I, you, the world, do with Jesus?

So today I want to deal with the question, Who was He?

Well, Jesus left no doubt as to...

I. Who He claimed to be

First, Jesus claimed to be God:

In a heated dispute with the Pharisees, Jesus made the stunning claim, "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30 NKJV).

They immediately pounced on this statement!

John records, "Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him. 32 Jesus answered them, "Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?" 33 The Jews answered Him, saying, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God." (10:31-33 NKJV)

His disciples also believed that Jesus was God...Again, the Apostle John writes:

"Before anything else existed, there was Christ, with God. He has always been alive and is himself God. 3 He created everything there is—nothing exists that he didn't make" (John 1:1-3 LB).

So John says that Jesus was never created but always existed, which is only true of God...

and that the creation of all things flowed through His fingertips...

and then John says plainly, "He himself is God."

When doubting Thomas saw the resurrected Christ with his own eyes, he exclaimed, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28 LB).

And next, Jesus also claimed to be the only begotten Son of God.

In the famous verse, John 3:16, spoken by Jesus, He says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son..." (NKJV)

The word "begotten" means "one and only offspring, one of a kind, the only one of its kind."

There was never anyone like him before, nor after!

At His trial the chief priests asked Him point blank, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of God?" (Mark 14:61 LB)

Jesus bluntly replied, "I am." (Mark 14:62 LB)

Jesus also made the spectacular claim that He was the ONLY way to God—the only path, the only route, the one and only avenue to personally knowing God:

John 14:6 "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me."

Jesus is not one of several ways, but the one and only way.

He didn't claim just to teach the way, but to be the way to God.

Nobody has ever made claims like that before, but Jesus did!

Jesus also made the outlandish claim that he could give everlasting life.

**"I give [my followers] eternal life, and they shall never perish;"
(John 10:28-30 NLT)**

Jesus didn't just tell people how they could find everlasting life, or deepen their own life experience.

He actually claimed to give eternal life himself!

And the most stunning claim Jesus ever made is that he would die and come back to life.

"Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished. 32 For He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon. 33 They will scourge Him and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again" (Luke 18:31-33 NKJV).

This claim put everything on the line...it became the ultimate proving point over whether or not he was truly who He claimed to be.

If he didn't rise from the dead, all His teaching, all His works, all His claims went down the drain.

But Jesus willingly rested everything on this claim—"When they kill me, I will rise from the dead!"

And the Bible says he arose!

Paul the Apostle writes, "He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said. 5 He was seen by Peter and then by the Twelve. 6 After that, he was seen by more than 500 of his followers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. 7 Then he was seen by James and later by all the apostles" (1 Cor. 15:4-7 NLT).

Now, as we look at these amazing statements made by Jesus Christ, there can be only one conclusion as to Who He was...

He was either: a legend, a liar, a lunatic—or Lord and God.

Well known Christian author C.S. Lewis wrote, "Either He was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us."

So who was Jesus?

He was God the Son, the only begotten Son of God, very God Himself wrapped in human form, the sinless, spotless sacrifice for our sins, and the soon coming King of Kings and Lord of all Lords! Let's pray...

