

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Christian Living
Study Guide

WHO IS JESUS? LESSON 1: WHO IS JESUS CHRIST?

INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Disciple Essentials module titled *Who is Jesus?* This series of seven lessons introduces the person and work of Jesus from a Christian perspective, considering His identity, work, teachings and death. Because Jesus is central to the Christian faith and religion, it is vital for the disciple to know Jesus, and for those exploring Christianity to know what makes Jesus Christ unique, and worthy of our discipleship and devotion.

The Study Guide is intended for an individual to look deeper into a specific lesson on their own. The lessons can be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials, such as the video and audio productions found on www.discipleshipessentials.org.



WHO IS JESUS?

LESSON 1: WHO IS JESUS CHRIST?

WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

The purpose of this lesson is to examine who Jesus is – where and when He lived, and what He claimed about Himself.

JUST SO YOU KNOW...

The word Christian means “Christ Follower”, so in order to understand what it means to be a Christian and what Christians believe, we must clearly understand who Jesus Christ is. Was He a good teacher? A persuasive Guru? A prophet of God? Or is He something much more? The claims Jesus made about Himself are an important place to start when exploring Christianity, or when preparing to share your faith in Jesus with others. This lesson is an excellent place to begin when exploring who Jesus Christ is!

GETTING STARTED

1. When you think of significant people in the history of the world, who do you think of? How did they change the world by the life they lived, and what legacy did they leave behind?

2. If someone asked you who Jesus is and why He is important to Christians, what would you say?



STUDY

❖ **JESUS IN HISTORY:** So many of the world’s religions talk about Jesus! Some people say He was an important figure in history, even though they say they are not religious but believe in science or humanity instead. So any student of history or religion should look into who Jesus was, and what He claimed about Himself.

- **When He lived:** The Bible and historical records place Jesus as having been born in Bethlehem in Judea, near the beginning of the first century. Historians place the year between 6 and 4 B.C., since Herod the Great died in 4 B.C. Several Bible verses help us place Jesus at a specific time in history.
- We will be looking into the Bible throughout this lesson to see what it says. You will need to look up each verse in order to find the answers to the questions below. Look up each verse and write down any details you find of when Jesus lived:

Matthew 2:1	
Luke 1:5	
Luke 3:1-2	

Each of these specific dates tells us that Jesus was a real person in history, not a mythology or story made up many years later. These Gospel accounts contain specific verifiable details that are written as precise history.

- **The Genealogy of Jesus:** Jesus was unique in His ancestry. The reports in the Gospels state that He was not born in the usual way, but was the product of a virgin birth. His mother, Mary, conceived Him by way of the Holy Spirit rather than through marital relations.
- Look up Matthew 1 and Luke 3:23-28. You don’t need to read these in detail, just glance through them.
 - o Matthew 1 gives us Jesus’ lineage and ancestors back to Abraham, through David. This is the lineage of Jesus’ earthly adoptive father, Joseph. As Joseph’s first son, this lineage makes Jesus a descendant of Abraham and an heir to the throne of King David.
 - o Luke 3: 23-38 gives us Jesus’ lineage through David all the way back to Adam. This genealogy, however, is that of Mary, Jesus’ mother, whose father was Heli. This ancestry proves that both by blood and by right, Jesus was of the family of David.



- o The genealogies are important for showing who Jesus was, and what He came to be. He was to fulfil the prophecies about an eternal King coming from the line of David. This ‘forever’ King would be Jesus Himself.
- **Jesus Life and Ministry:** The Gospel accounts – the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John – tell us about Jesus’ life and ministry from four different perspectives. From them we get some basic facts about Jesus.
 - o Jesus was raised in Nazareth in Galilee, and travelled about the area and finished His ministry in Jerusalem.
 - o Jesus studied as a carpenter under His adoptive father, Joseph (Matthew 13:55).
 - o He had several brothers – James, Joses, Judas and Simon.
 - o While it is demonstrated that Jesus could read, reason, and debate, we do not know if He received formal education other than what He received in the Temple.
 - o He was baptised by John the Baptist.
 - o He taught in synagogues, on the streets, in various places and performed miracles.
 - o He had many disciples and followers, and twelve of His closest disciples were later named Apostles.
 - o He was tried for claiming to be the Messiah. These trials took place in the Jewish court by the high priest, Caiaphas, and then finally by the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, who condemned Jesus to death.
 - o Jesus was crucified, died, was placed in a tomb and miraculously returned to life three days later. He then was seen by many people who had watched Him be crucified ([1 Corinthians 15: 3-8](#)).
- ❖ **What Did Jesus Say About Himself?** In our study of who Jesus Christ was in history and what He means to us today, we must understand both what Jesus said about Himself and what others said about who He was. The statements He made are not vague or neutral. They make specific claims about who He is and what He came to do. These are not the claims of someone who was merely a prophet, or who set out to be a good teacher. They are much more!
 - **He claimed to be the Messiah:** When speaking to a woman from Samaria, Jesus clearly told her He was the Messiah. *The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things.” Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am he.”* ([John 4:25-26](#)).
 - **He claimed to be sinless:** When Jesus walked the earth, He often had religious leaders and powerful people test Him. Read [John 8:46-47](#) and [John 8:28-29](#). Then write down what He said about sin.



What is more remarkable still, no one was able to find fault with Jesus! The crime He was guilty of and punished for was being king of the Jews (John 10:36-38, Luke 23:40-43). Later, the Apostle Paul explains the significance of this claim (2 Corinthians 5:21).

➤ **He claimed to be the only way to God:** Jesus taught people who He was by claiming that He alone was the way to God the Father, and that God was revealed in Him. At times He used the words “I AM”, words that God used to identify Himself in Exodus 3:14. Read these statements:

- o “Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58).
- o “I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved” (John 10:9).
- o “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep” (John 10:11).
- o “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live” (John 11:25).
- o “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

➤ Could these claims have been true about an ordinary man? Is it possible these claims could have been made even by a prophet? Or was Jesus claiming to be more than any prophet and above all humanity?

➤ **He claimed to be able to forgive sins.** Jesus went around not only healing people, but forgiving their sins. Since sins are committed against God, how could anyone but God forgive them? Read Luke 5:20-21 and Luke 7: 48-49. Who does Jesus say is able to forgive sins?

➤ **He claimed He could give eternal life.** Read John 10:17 and John 10:28-30. What does Jesus say about eternal life?



Jesus didn't tell people how to find eternal life, He told them He could give it to them Himself. It is through belief in Jesus that life is found. This is not something a man (even a special prophet of God) can offer.

- All of these statements of Jesus reveal that He truly is the Son of God, the Son of Man, the promised Messiah and in fact, God Himself – all in one! Jesus did not tell people He was a prophet of God, a teacher, or a guide; He claimed to be the promised gift of God.

❖ **What Do Others Say About Jesus?** The books that follow the four Gospels in the New Testament are mostly letters written to different churches by Apostles or anointed teachers who shared revelation they had received from God. These letters explain some of the statements made about Jesus in the Gospels.

- **Son of God** – Jesus is called the Son of God. This does not place Him lower than God, but rather He shares equal power, authority and honour. Jesus also identified Himself as the Son who had come from the Father, and who could speak to God with the closeness of a Son speaking to His dear Father. Other people also identified Him as God's Son. Read what others said about Him. Who identified Jesus as the Son of God?

<p>1 John 5:20 Matthew 14:33 Luke 22:70 John 10:30</p>	
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- **Son of Man** – This was Jesus' preferred term for Himself, and it is used 88 times in the New Testament. At face value it might appear to be an ordinary term for 'person'. However, it identified Him as being fully divine and fully human at the same time; therefore, Jesus had two natures. It also points back to prophetic statements in Daniel 7:13-14 that foretold a powerful figure that would have an everlasting kingdom and be worshipped by all people. In addition, Jesus said it was blasphemy to speak ill of the Son of Man. How is Jesus identified as the Son of Man?

<p>Matthew 12:40 Matthew 16:27 Acts 7:56</p>	
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- **The Messiah or Christ the Lord** - The Jews were anxiously awaiting the coming of Messiah, or Christ, who would save them. They were expecting a military or royal leader to rescue them from their political oppression. But Jesus came instead to save them from their sinful selves. Jesus’ followers recognized that He fulfilled the prophecies about the Messiah. The term ‘Christ’ means the anointed one. The term ‘Lord’ means ruler or King. Both are terms that refer to the Messiah. Who identifies Jesus as Lord, Messiah or the Christ?

John 1:40-42 Mark 8:29 Galatians 3:16	
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- **Word of God** – The Bible writers identify Jesus as the Word of God. This is a specific title that presents Jesus as existing before his physical birth in Bethlehem. He is the one who could execute God’s will, who created the world, and who was God revealing Himself to mankind. The word “Word”, to the Greeks who first heard it, would have meant a bridge between the transcendent God and humanity. This title shows that God’s will and His nature are revealed in Jesus Christ. What does the Bible say about Jesus’ identity as the Word of God?

John 1:1-3 John 14:9 Colossians 1:15-17	
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❖ **Who do you say Jesus is?** The claims Jesus makes about Himself require us to decide if we believe them or not.

- Jesus claimed to be the Almighty God in human form – equal and one with God the Father. He said He pre-existed, and that all of creation was made through Him and for Him. Jesus forgives sins and yet is sinless himself.
- Martha, the sister of Lazarus who Jesus resurrected from the dead, believed Jesus. This excerpt from that tremendous account in John 11 asks Martha the key question we too must answer: “Do you believe this?” – *Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?” She said to him, “Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.” (John 11:25-27).*
- You must decide if you believe what Jesus said is true, and if you will put your faith in Him.



IN SUMMARY

- ❖ Many of the world's religions talk about Jesus, or take a position on His identity. Any student of religion should look into who Jesus was and what He claimed to be true about Himself.
- ❖ Jesus lived in a specific time and place in history, and we also see His lineage listed in the Gospels.
- ❖ The Gospel accounts tell us about Jesus' life and ministry from four different perspectives, from which we can learn some basic facts about Him.
- ❖ Jesus claimed to be sinless, the only way to God, to be able to forgive sins and grant eternal life.
- ❖ Others spoke about Jesus and identified Him as the Son of God, the Son of Man, the Messiah, the Christ, and the Word of God.
- ❖ The claims Jesus made require us to decide if we will accept those claims. This was a man who claimed to be the Almighty God in human form – equal and one with God!

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think that the identity of Jesus is such a contentious issue?

2. If we accept that Jesus is who He says He is, what changes would it require us to make in our lives?