

Who is Jesus Christ?

Jesus is the Messiah

Who is Jesus Christ? Who did he claim to be? Jesus asked this question about Himself. Jesus' earthly ministry lasted about three years. At its beginning He chose twelve disciples who ministered with and learned from Him during those years. During those years He was in constant conflict with the Jewish religious authorities. One day, Jesus asked a revealing question of His disciples. Matthew recorded,

*¹³ Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" ¹⁴ And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." ¹⁵ He *said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷ And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸ I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven." ²⁰ Then He warned the disciples that they should tell no one that He was the Christ (Matthew 16.13-20).*

Jesus commended Peter for giving the right answer. What did Peter say? Peter said Jesus was the Christ (ὁ Χριστός) or the Messiah. The Messiah was the one sent from God who would establish Israel as the top nation of the world, rule from Jerusalem, and bring in a government of world peace and

righteousness. He was the one to whom the Old Testament pointed and whom the prophets foretold. Peter also said Jesus was the "Son of the living God". What did that mean? It meant Peter recognized Jesus was divine. What was Jesus' response? He told Peter he was blessed and his answer was right because God Himself revealed it to him. He then went on to declare that he would give to Peter the keys to the kingdom of heaven and that these "keys" would give him authority to "bind and loose". This in itself was a remarkable statement. Who can give that kind of authority? Can a man? No, only God can grant such authority. So Jesus revealed that he was God.

Jesus is YHVH (יהוה)

Jesus not only taught his disciples that he was God, He revealed this truth to those opposed to him by His statements and by His deeds. Consider the remarkable confrontation Jesus had with the Jewish authorities John recorded in John 8.

³¹ So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8.31-32).

This verse sets the context for the argument. Among those who believed Jesus' words were those of the Jewish religious establishment who did not believe him but were constantly trying to confound, accuse, and condemn him. Upon hearing Jesus they replied (their self-righteous sarcasm is visceral):

They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, 'You will become free'" (John 8.33)?

John recorded Jesus' answer:

³⁴ Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone

who commits sin is the slave of sin. ³⁵ The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. ³⁶ So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed. ³⁷ I know that you are Abraham's descendants; yet you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. ³⁸ I speak the things which I have seen with My Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from your father" (John 8.34-38).

We now have a full-blown argument. These Pharisees continued to assert their righteousness and declared Abraham was their Father. Note their statement and how Jesus replied:

³⁹ They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus *said to them, "If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham. ⁴⁰ But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do. ⁴¹ You are doing the deeds of your father." They said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father: God." ⁴² Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me. ⁴³ Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word. ⁴⁴ You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. ⁴⁵ But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me. ⁴⁶ Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me? ⁴⁷ He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God" (John 8.39-47).

The Jews responded by stating that Jesus was a demonically possessed half-breed. Jesus responded to their insult by invoking His obedience to God and His own authority over death itself.

⁴⁸ *The Jews answered and said to Him, "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?"* ⁴⁹ *Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me.* ⁵⁰ *But I do not seek My glory; there is One who seeks and judges.* ⁵¹ *Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he will never see death"* (John 8.48-51).

The Jews could not comprehend his answer. They could not imagine they were speaking with the Creator, the God of Israel Himself. They replied:

⁵² *The Jews said to Him, "Now we know that You have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets also; and You say, 'If anyone keeps My word, he will never taste of death.'* ⁵³ *Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets died too; whom do You make Yourself out to be"* (John 8.52-53).

Jesus pointed out that they were religious but far from God. He ended by making a remarkable statement about Abraham.

⁵⁴ *Jesus answered, "If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, 'He is our God';* ⁵⁵ *and you have not come to know Him, but I know Him; and if I say that I do not know Him, I will be a liar like you, but I do know Him and keep His word.* ⁵⁶ *Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad"* (John 8.54-56).

Unable to resist this statement the Jews continued:

⁵⁷ So the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?"

Notice Jesus' response

⁵⁸ Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am."

And their reaction:

⁵⁹ Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple.

What did Jesus say to make them angry enough to stone him? Jesus' words, "truly, truly" were an idiom that meant, "listen up, what I'm telling you, you can take to the bank." That got their attention. Then he said the words,

"Ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, πρὶν Ἀβραὰμ γενέσθαι ἐγὼ εἰμί."

This is translated, "Truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham came into being, I am." Abraham γενέσθαι—he was born, he came into being. But Jesus did not "become," γενέσθαι. He was ἐγὼ εἰμί, "I am". He did not become, He is. He claimed eternal self-existence. Do not think the Jews did not understand what he was saying. They got it. They knew their Bible and their minds immediately flashed to God's words to Moses in Exodus 3.13-14.

¹³ Then Moses said to God, "Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now they may say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?" ¹⁴ God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel,

'I AM has sent me to you.'"

What Jesus was telling these Jews was that he was the God of the Bible. He was the eternal, ever-existing one, the I AM. He was God Almighty.

Jesus Forgave Sin

Jesus not only made claims of his divinity, he proved his words with deeds. Jesus had a widespread healing ministry. He healed thousands. Luke recorded a dramatic healing of a paralyzed man in Luke 5.17-26:

¹⁷ One day He was teaching; and there were some Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was present for Him to perform healing.

¹⁸ And some men were carrying on a bed a man who was paralyzed; and they were trying to bring him in and to set him down in front of Him. ¹⁹ But not finding any way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down through the tiles with his stretcher, into the middle of the crowd, in front of Jesus. ²⁰ Seeing their faith, He said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven you." ²¹ The scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, "Who is this man who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?" ²² But Jesus, aware of their reasonings, answered and said to them, "Why are you reasoning in your hearts? ²³ Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins have been forgiven you,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? ²⁴ But, so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,"—He said to the paralytic—"I say to you, get up, and pick up your stretcher and go home." ²⁵ Immediately he got up before them, and picked up what he had been lying on, and went home

glorifying God. ²⁶ They were all struck with astonishment and began glorifying God; and they were filled with fear, saying, "We have seen remarkable things today."

Here we find a situation where Jesus was teaching and some Pharisees and lawyers were present. Some Jews approached carrying a paralyzed man and tried to get their friend to Jesus for they had heard about his healings. But the crowd was so dense they could not get him to Jesus. Someone came up with the bright idea to attack from above. They climbed onto the roof, tore off the tiles, and began to lower the lame man down into the crowd. What a scene! Jesus, observing this, was impressed. What did he say to them? Luke recorded:

²⁰ Seeing their faith, He said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven you."

What was the reaction of the religious authorities?

²¹ The scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, "Who is this man who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?"

They were right. Only God can forgive sins. What was Jesus' response? Luke recorded:

²² But Jesus, aware of their reasonings, answered and said to them, "Why are you reasoning in your hearts? ²³ Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins have been forgiven you,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? ²⁴ But, so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,"—He said to the paralytic—"I say to you, get up, and pick up your stretcher and go home."

Jesus presented the religious leaders with a question. He asked them what was easier, to say "your sins are forgiven" or "get up and walk". What was the answer to the question? It is easier to say "your sins are forgiven". That requires no proof. So what did Jesus do? He gave them proof. To demonstrate he had power to forgive sins he healed the man. Now it is important not to miss the significance of Jesus' statement. If you do something wrong to me I can forgive you and the matter is settled. But this man had nothing against Jesus and yet Jesus declared that his sins were forgiven. If a regular person went around forgiving people whom he has never seen or had any dealings we would call the person mad. But Jesus was not mad. He considered that the fact of the matter was that he was the person chiefly offended by sin. And to prove it he healed the man.

Another thing not to overlook is that Luke's statement that Jesus "saw their faith." Who can "see faith" but God? Luke recorded the reaction of the man and the crowd:

²⁵ Immediately he got up before them, and picked up what he had been lying on, and went home glorifying God. ²⁶ They were all struck with astonishment and began glorifying God; and they were filled with fear, saying, "We have seen remarkable things today."

Jesus Healed the Blind

One of the greatest miracles Jesus performed was the healing of a blind man. John wrote that this man was blind from birth (John 9.1). Jesus healed the man and the man was taken to the Pharisees to show them that he had been healed (John 9.13). The Pharisees kept asking how he was healed. He kept repeating what had happened but they refused to believe. They then asked the man's parents but they were afraid to answer (John 9.19-23) and told the Pharisees to ask their son. They did and then got into an argument with him. No one is more testy than

self-righteous religious people. The former blind man was uneducated but gave the Pharisees a theological lesson:

³⁰ *The man answered and said to them, "Well, here is an amazing thing, that you do not know where He is from, and yet He opened my eyes. ³¹ We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing and does His will, He hears him. ³² Since the beginning of time it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. ³³ If this man were not from God, He could do nothing."*

Unable to respond, the Jews excommunicated him (John 9.34). When Jesus heard about this he made a special effort to find and speak with him. John recorded:

³⁵ *Jesus heard that they had put him out, and finding him, He said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" ³⁶ He answered, "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?" ³⁷ Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him, and He is the one who is talking with you." ³⁸ And he said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped Him. ³⁹ And Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, so that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind."⁴⁰ Those of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things and said to Him, "We are not blind too, are we?" ⁴¹ Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.*

The term "Son of Man" was the title Jesus took to identify himself with man as the God-man and Messiah. God had used this nomenclature many times for Ezekiel. Jesus asked the man if he believed in the Son of Man. When the man asked him who he was, Jesus declared that he was the "Son of Man", that is, the Messiah. The man believed and worshiped him. Only God is

worthy of worship. Jesus accepted this worship for he is God.

Jesus is the Only Way

Shortly before his crucifixion Jesus spoke words to comfort his disciples. He declared that he was the only way to God. Notice he did not say *a* way, he said *the* way. John recorded in John 14.1-6:

¹ *“Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. ² In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. ³ If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also. ⁴ And you know the way where I am going.”*
⁵ *Thomas *said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?”⁶ Jesus *said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.*

Jesus is Equal to the Father

Continuing his discourse, Jesus said that if anyone knew him he also knew the Father. Philip, not understanding, asked to see the Father. Jesus declared that who had seen him had seen the Father. John recorded:

⁷ *If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him.” ⁸ Philip *said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.”*
⁹ *Jesus *said to him, “Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? ¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own*

initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works.

¹¹ Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves. ¹² Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father (John 14.7-12).

Jesus is the Creator

Moses wrote in Genesis 2.4 regarding the creation of the world:

This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made earth and heaven.

The Lord God (אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהִים) made the heavens and the earth. We know from a number of Scriptures and from Jesus' own words that he is YHVH, אֱלֹהִים. Jesus Christ is the one who created the universe—the heavens and the earth (John 1.3; Colossians 1.15-16; Hebrews 1.2; Ephesians 3.9; 1 Corinthians 8.6).

Jesus Rose from the Dead

There is only one who has the power to rise from the dead. No man has this power. Only God can raise the dead. The Scriptures teach that Jesus rose from the dead and for Christians this is the proof that Jesus paid for our sins and satisfied the righteousness of a holy God. This is the gospel (1 Corinthians. 15.1-5). The reaction of the disciples to Jesus' resurrection is the clearest proof of the historicity of Jesus' resurrection. No other rational explanation can explain their change of behavior. The resurrection turned them from terrified cowards to become as bold as lions. Why? They had seen the resurrected Lord (Matthew 28.6-7; Mark 16.6-14; Luke 24.6, 34; 2 Timothy 2.8; John 2.22; 21.14; Acts 2.24, 32; 3.15, 26; 4.10; 5.30; 10.40; 13.30, 33-34, 37; Romans 4.24-25;

6.4, 9; 7.4; 8.11, 34; 10.9; 1 Corinthians 6.14; 15.4, 12-20; 2 Corinthians 4.14; Galatians 1.1; Ephesians 1.20; Colossians 2.6, 12; 3.1; 1 Thessalonians 1.10; 1 Peter 1.21).

Conclusion

C. S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity* wrote the following:

"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: "I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God." That is the one thing we must not say. A man who said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; 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. He did not intend to."¹

Some have criticized Lewis that his logic is flawed. I would submit that those who have made this argument have failed to examine carefully Jesus' statements. They need to read their Bibles. When one reads the Scriptures, the accounts about Jesus such as the ones above, one rational conclusion exists: Jesus is God. Lewis' logic was flawless.

¹ See P. H. Brazier. 'God . . . Or a Bad, or Mad, Man': C. S. Lewis's Argument for Christ—A Systematic Theological, Historical and Philosophical Analysis of *Aut Deus Aut Malus Homo*. *The Heythrop Journal*. Vol. LV (2014), pp. 1-30 for an analysis of Lewis' argument and its history.

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