

FINDING OUT ABOUT CHRIST · STUDY NOTES

Study 1: Who is Jesus Christ?

For personal study or groups

Your name

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How to use these notes. Watch each part's video on biblehelp.net, or read the text below. Look up each passage in your own Bible and write the answer on the lines. The verses are printed at the back if you need them. At the end there are questions to think about on your own or to discuss in a group.

PART 1

Who do people say He is?

Going back in time

Imagine yourself boarding an aircraft and travelling, not only to another country, but back in time! Eventually you land in Israel as it was almost 2,000 years ago. When you get off the plane you discover that everyone is talking about a man named Jesus, from a town called Nazareth.

Some people like Him, while others hate Him. Some say that He is a troublemaker and deceiver, and others that He is a special messenger of God, a prophet. And there are yet others who believe He is the Son of God, the Christ.

As you listen, you are surprised that He makes some people so angry. At the same time, others come to love Him, and even to worship Him. One thing is clear as you watch Him for yourself. Here is a person who is remarkably kind, forthright and courageous!

Historic note
Christ's life on earth began in the days of the Roman emperor Caesar Augustus (27 BC – AD 14).

In this study we shall consider what people said about Jesus, and what Jesus said about Himself.

The curiosity of the crowds

Vast numbers gathered to hear Jesus and be healed.

1 **Look up Luke 5:15**

Why did great crowds come to Jesus?

The opinions of some

For various views about Jesus, read Matthew 16:13–16.

2 **Look up Matthew 16:13–16**

Who did people say Jesus was, and what did Peter say (verse 16)?

See also: opposing attitudes (John 7:12); devotion (Matthew 26:7); worship (Matthew 14:33).

PART 2

What Jesus said about Himself

As proud as peacocks

Some people are like peacocks, proudly displaying their own glory. They like to boast about who they are and what they can do. They like to be important. We soon realise the kind of people they are, and take no notice of them. But when a person with the moral character of Jesus speaks, it has to be taken seriously. How could someone as humble and selfless as Jesus speak great things about Himself unless, of course, they were true? We saw earlier what other people said about Jesus. Now let us see what Jesus said about Himself.

The claims of Jesus

No previous spiritual leader or prophet ever spoke about themselves as Jesus did. They pointed people to God, but Jesus directed people to Himself. He declared Himself to be the way to God, and the solution to our greatest needs. No wonder some found His language blasphemous and insulting to God. They were forced either to believe Him, or condemn Him!

Jesus claimed to be the Bread of Life, the Light of the World, and the Gate of salvation. He also claimed to be the Way to God.

3 **Look up John 14:6**

What does Jesus say about coming to the Father?

Either Jesus was mad...
...or telling the truth.

See also: John 6:35; John 8:12; John 10:9.

The claim to have pre-existed

Jesus spoke of a time, before the world was created, when He lived with God.

4 **Look up John 17:5**

When does Jesus say He had this glory with the Father?

He implied that He existed before Abraham – a man who lived as long before Jesus, as we do after Him.

See also: John 8:56–58.

The claim to be God's Son

Finally, by calling God His Father, Jesus claimed to be God's Son in a special sense. It was a claim to equality with God.

5 **Look up John 5:18**

Why did the Jews try all the more to kill Jesus?

PART 3

Weighing the evidence: your verdict

Signs have a meaning

Everywhere around us are signs – and they all have a meaning of some kind. A road sign tells drivers to take care, as people are working on the road. The miracles Jesus did were signs, and they too have a meaning. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John record many of the

miraculous signs Jesus did. Most of His miracles were compassionate. He healed those who had diseases, and made the lame walk and the blind see. He even raised the dead.

But Jesus also performed miracles that showed His power over nature. He walked on water, stilled a storm and multiplied food to feed thousands of hungry people. On one occasion He turned water into wine.

The meaning of the signs Jesus did

The miracles of Jesus were to confirm the things He said about Himself. They were signs to show that He really was, in a unique sense, God's Son.

6 **Look up John 20:30–31**

Why were these signs written down?

Why Jesus gave signs

No one should need a sign to believe. Jesus did miracles so that people would have no excuse for their unbelief.

7 **Read John 15:22–24**

What had the people seen, and how did they respond (verse 24)?

His miracles are recorded for our sake, so that we too should have no excuse.

Weighing the evidence

Courts of law are meant to weigh evidence carefully in order to discover the truth. In a similar way, the New Testament writers want us to weigh the evidence about Jesus – and this is what this course is seeking to do. You are the jury, and the disciples of Jesus (the apostles) are the witnesses.

8 **Look up Acts 2:32**

What do the apostles say they are witnesses of?

Further evidence: Jesus forgave sin

You have been weighing the things Jesus said about Himself, and the significance of His miracles. You should also consider the way Jesus forgave sin. No prophet or religious teacher ever did this, as only God can forgive sin. Jesus angered many people by declaring a person's sins forgiven. It implied that He was God.

9 **Read Luke 5:18–21**

What did Jesus say to the man, and what did the scribes and Pharisees think (verses 20–21)?

It also implied that Jesus could read a person's heart, and know when he or she was genuinely sorry.

See also: Luke 7:36–50.

Still more evidence: the virgin birth

To reach a verdict about Jesus we must also weigh up what the New Testament writers say about His birth. They plainly state that He was born to a virgin – someone who had never been intimate with a man! God's Spirit brought about His conception.

10 **Read Luke 1:26–35**

What does the angel say the child will be called (verse 35)?

This also sets Jesus apart as being very different from other men. It suggests that He is much more than a man – that He is also God.

Is anything too hard for the Almighty God?
Note the phrase "God with us" in Matthew 1:23.

What is your conclusion?

Jesus began His stay on earth in a unique way, and left the world in an equally unusual manner. His death would not be final. He would come alive and never die again. The resurrection of Jesus is an historic event, and so important that we shall devote a complete study to it later.

Historic note
Jesus was 33 years old when He died an excruciating death by crucifixion. But it wasn't the end!

Then, who is Jesus Christ? He made an amazing impact on the people of His day. They wanted to discover the truth about Him, just as you do. But in looking at the same person they came to different conclusions. As a member of the jury you are expected to give your verdict.

Will you say, like the disciple Thomas, that He is your Lord and God?

11 **Look up John 20:28**

What did Thomas call Jesus?

THINK IT THROUGH

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. Before this study, who did you think Jesus was?

2. Which of Jesus' claims about Himself struck you most, and why?

3. Having weighed the evidence so far, what is your verdict about Jesus?

HIDE IT IN YOUR HEART

Memory verse for study 1

Learn this verse by heart this week. Cut out the card and keep it where you will see it.

FINDING OUT ABOUT CHRIST · STUDY 1 · MEMORY VERSE

“Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’”

John 14:6

Berean Standard Bible · biblehelp.net

“I have hidden Your word in my heart that I might not sin against You.” (Psalm 119:11, BSB)

AT THE BACK

The Bible passages (BSB)

1 **Luke 5:15** *But the news about Jesus spread all the more, and great crowds came to hear Him and to be healed of their sicknesses.*

2 **Matthew 16:13–16** *13When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, He questioned His disciples: "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" 14They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." 15"But what about you?" Jesus asked. "Who do you say I am?" 16Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."*

3 **John 14:6** *Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*

4 **John 17:5** *And now, Father, glorify Me in Your presence with the glory I had with You before the world existed.*

5 **John 5:18** *Because of this, the Jews tried all the harder to kill Him. Not only was He breaking the Sabbath, but He was even calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.*

6 **John 20:30–31** *30Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book. 31But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.*

7 **John 15:22–24** *22If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they have no excuse for their sin. 23Whoever hates Me hates My Father as well. 24If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin; but now they have seen and hated both Me and My Father.*

8 **Acts 2:32** *God has raised this Jesus to life, to which we are all witnesses.*

9 **Luke 5:18–21** *18Just then some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a mat. They tried to bring him inside to set him before Jesus, 19but they could not find a way through the crowd. So they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus. 20When Jesus saw their faith, He said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven." 21But the scribes and Pharisees began thinking to themselves, "Who is this man who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"*

10 **Luke 1:26–35** *26In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, 27to a virgin pledged in marriage to a man named Joseph, who was of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. 28The angel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." 29Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. 30So the angel told her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31Behold, you will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus. 32He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David, 33and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever. His kingdom will never end!" 34"How can this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" 35The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the Holy One to be born will be called the Son of God.*

11 **John 20:28** *Thomas replied, "My Lord and my God!"*

Scripture: Berean Standard Bible (BSB), public domain. Quotations keep its American spelling. Like many English Bibles, it often says 'man', 'he' or 'brothers' where it means people in general, men and women alike.

FOR GROUP LEADERS

Study 1: Who is Jesus Christ?

> **Memory verse:** “Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’” (John 14:6). Say it together at the end, and ask who can say it without looking.

Aims

- Hear what people in Jesus' day said about Him, and what Jesus said about Himself.
- Weigh the evidence: His claims, His miracles ("signs"), the eyewitnesses, His forgiving of sin and His birth.
- Invite each person to think about their own verdict, without pressure.

Suggested timing (about 75 minutes)

- **5 min** Welcome, short prayer, introductions if the group is new.
- **20 min** Part 1 video (4 min), then look up Luke 5:15 and Matthew 16:13–16 together.
- **20 min** Part 2 video (5 min), then John 14:6, 17:5 and 5:18.
- **25 min** Part 3 video (6 min), then the remaining passages and the discussion questions.
- **5 min** Summary and closing prayer. Encourage everyone to take the online quiz.

If time is short, spread the study over two meetings (Parts 1–2, then Part 3).

Tips

- Let everyone find the verses in their own Bible; help newcomers with the contents page. Nobody should feel pressured to read aloud.
- Welcome questions and doubts. Thomas doubted too, and Jesus met him kindly.
- Keep coming back to what the passage actually says.
- The key question is Jesus' own: "Who do you say I am?" (Matthew 16:15).

Answers to watch for

- **Luke 5:15:** crowds came to hear Jesus and to be healed.
- **Matthew 16:16:** Peter: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."
- **John 14:6:** Jesus is *the* way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Him.
- **John 17:5:** Jesus shared the Father's glory before the world existed. He has always existed.
- **John 5:18:** calling God His own Father, He made Himself equal with God.
- **John 20:30–31:** the signs were written so that we may believe and have life in His name.
- **John 15:24:** His works were ones no one else did, so people have no excuse.
- **Acts 2:32:** the apostles were witnesses of the resurrection.
- **Luke 5:20–21:** Jesus forgave sins, which only God can do.
- **Luke 1:35:** conceived by the Holy Spirit, He is called the Son of God.
- **John 20:28:** Thomas: "My Lord and my God!"