

# discipleship essentials

Essentials for Christian Living  
Leader's 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. You may have participants from a variety of cultural and religious backgrounds who have differing ideas about who Jesus is and what He taught. This series will be an excellent foundation for their future studies in discipleship.

### INTENDED AUDIENCE

The intended audience for these lessons is new Christians, those who would like a refresher on the basics of Christianity, as well as those preparing to teach these Christian practices and beliefs. Also, those with an interest in Christian thought will find value in these lessons as they pertain to daily living and choices.

The Leader's Guide is intended to help you as a leader in your preparation. These lesson outlines may be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials found online at [www.discipleshipessentials.org](http://www.discipleshipessentials.org).

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# WHO IS JESUS?

## LESSON 1: WHO IS JESUS CHRIST?

### PURPOSE

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

### LEADER'S NOTE

You may have participants who have had a lifelong faith in Jesus Christ, or participants who have come from other religious backgrounds and are just exploring Christianity. This series of lessons are ideal for those wanting to learn who Jesus is in the Christian religion. You will have to adapt this content to suit your audience. This material may be beneficial for those learning how to teach others about Jesus. Having correct information about who Jesus is and what He claimed to be is the first step in putting one's faith in Jesus as the Son of God, the one who can forgive us from our sins.

## INTRODUCTION

*Select two or three of the following questions to ask the group.*

- ❖ 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?
- ❖ What does the name Jesus mean to you?
- ❖ Christians use many titles for Jesus – such as “the way, the truth and the life”. Can you think of any others you have heard?
- ❖ If someone asked you who Jesus is and why He is important to Christians, what would you say?

## STUDY

*Instruct the group on the following points.*

### TEACH

- ❖ **Jesus in History:** So many of the world's religions talk about Jesus! Some people may say He was an important figure in history or a good moral teacher, even though they say they are not religious but believe in science or humanity instead. So every student of history or religion should look into who Jesus was, and what He claimed to be true 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. Several Bible verses help us place Jesus at a specific time in history.
  - Matthew 2:1 tells us Jesus was born in the era of Herod the Great who died in 4 B.C.
  - Luke 2:2 tell us that Jesus was born during the time of the Census of Quirinius, governor of Syria. There are records of a census that included Judea in 6 B.C.
  - Luke 3:1-2 tells us that Jesus was baptized during the 15<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea.
  - Each of these specific dates tells us that Jesus was a real person in history, not a mythological figure or the main character of a 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.
  - 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.
  - 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, who was married to Joseph, whose father was Heli. This ancestry proves that both by blood and by right, Jesus was of the family of David.
  - 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.
  - Jesus was raised in Nazareth in Galilee, travelled about the area, and finished His ministry in Jerusalem.
  - Jesus studied as a carpenter under His adoptive father, Joseph (Matthew 13:55).
  - He had several brothers – James, Joses, Judas and Simon.
  - 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.
  - 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. He said that no one is free of sin, but that He was without sin ([John 8:46-47](#), [John 8:28-29](#)). 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 lays down His life for the sheep" ([John 10:11](#)).
  - o "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever 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](#)).
- **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? ([Luke 5:20-21](#), [Luke 7: 48-49](#))



- **He claimed He could give 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 (John 10:17, John 10:28-30).
  - 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.
    - 1 John 5:20
    - Matthew 14:33
    - Luke 22:70
    - John 20:31
  - **Son of Man** – This is the term Jesus preferred 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 clearly 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.
    - Matthew 12:40
    - Matthew 16:27
    - Acts 7:56
  - **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.
    - John 1:40-42
    - Mark 8:29
    - Galatians 3:16



- **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.
  - [John 1:1-3](#)
  - [John 4:25-26](#)
  - [John 14:9](#)
  - [Colossians 1:15-17](#)
  
- ❖ **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](#)).
  
  - We must decide if we believe what Jesus said is true, and if we will put our faith in Him.



## DISCUSSION

- ❖ Which claim that Jesus made about Himself is most surprising to you?
- ❖ Why do you think that the identity of Jesus is such a contentious issue?
- ❖ If we accept that Jesus is who He says He is, what changes would it require us to make in our lives?
- ❖ Why do you think God made sure the writers of the Bible were so specific about the details of Jesus' life? How is this different than the writings of other religions or mythologies?

## PRAYER

*Close with prayer for your participants. Pray that they would understand who Jesus is, and know the truth that God revealed through the person of Jesus. Pray that they would honour Him as Lord and Messiah and see their need for a Saviour.*