

- **Setting the stage** – This is the 3rd year of Jesus’ ministry, just months before Calvary.
- This question is recorded in three of the Gospels: Matt 16:13, Mark 8:27, Luke 9:18.
- Matt 16:13-16
 - Travelling towards the Northern end of Israel, near a pagan Roman city (Caesarea Philippi) built around a natural spring and dedicated to the Greek god Pan.
 - Near a very pagan town, where people worshipped whatever, Jesus asks his disciples this curious question. Some say John the Baptist, or Elisha or Jeremiah...
- Mal 4:5
 - Scripture even promises that God will send Elijah back before the end of the world.
 - **After several years of teaching and miracles, Jesus has stirred up many opinions about his identity. And this was the point, knowing who Jesus is - and understanding what that means – may be the most critical question that humanity needs to answer.**
- John 14:1-6
 - A beautiful example of the Jesus problem: **If He is telling the truth, He makes an extraordinary claim that cannot be ignored.**

Discussion Point – What do people say about the identity of Jesus Christ?

[Ask for audience input]

- **Thomas Jefferson**, very private about his religious beliefs, acknowledged that he believed in a supreme being but denied that **Jesus was in any way divine**, but he taught a “system of the most sublime morality which has ever fallen from the lips of man”. In other words – **he was a good moral guide.**
- **The Quran, of Islam, states that Jesus was a Prophet and Messenger** of God born of a virgin by an act of God. That he was sinless and performed miracles, but not in any way God in the flesh. They teach he was not crucified and will return on the Day of Judgment to restore justice.
- **The Baha’i Faith**, believing there are many ways to God, **teach that Jesus is one of a series of manifestations of God** as well as Moses, the Buddha, Muhammad and most recently, Baha’u’llah. All these manifestations are like perfect mirrors through which God’s spirit comes into the world.

- **The Mormons teach that Jesus was a man that lived on another planet, yet lived a perfect life there and attained his godhood**, and that he was given this planet as a reward. His father, Jehovah, then came to this planet and slept with the teenage Mary to introduce Jesus into the Earth so he could die for our sins. His brother, Lucifer, has been wrecking the place out of jealousy. If you are a man, you can become a god too and have your own planet someday. (Bonus: women can marry a future god-man to be pregnant through eternity to help populate that worlds!!!)

Wow, a lot of strange options here, let's look at this question – who do you say that I am – and examine its answer throughout scripture. Remember, one of our goals is to speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent, letting the Word of God have the final authority in what we believe.

What do the Old Testament Prophets say?

- Calling a name here is the same as applying attributes or adjectives to that person.
 - Isaiah 9:6
 - **The name of this child to come is the name of... The mighty God and the everlasting Father.**
 - Isaiah 40:3-5
 - A prophecy about the ministry of John the Baptist who will prepare the way of the LORD. All flesh will see the glory of the LORD revealed.
 - Micah 5:2
 - From Bethlehem will come one of Eternal origins.
 - Psalms 2:6-7
 - The Messiah will be the Son of God, begotten from the Father. He will not be like other men.
 - Zechariah 12:10
 - When God pours out His Spirit on Jerusalem, then the crowd will know who they harmed, that it was God Himself that was pierced.
 - Isaiah 53:1-12
 - **This Messiah will suffer, be rejected, carry our sorrows, be wounded and bruised, and our iniquity and sins will be put on him as a lamb to be sacrificed as an offering for sin. He will die among criminals so we can be free.**
-

What did the Angels say?

- **The Angel tells Mary to call Him, Jesus, meaning “God is our Salvation”, and He will be called the Son of God because this child will come through the Holy Spirit.**
 - Luke 1:30-38 (or 1:30-31,35,37)
 - Matthew 1:20-23
 - Joseph is told to call the future savior Jesus. This fulfills the Isaiah 7:14 prophecy of a virgin birth. He will also be called Emmanuel or “God with us”.
-

What did the Religious Leaders of His day say?

- Mark 3:22-23
- John 10:23-33
- Matt 27:38-43
- The scribes accused Jesus of being possessed.
 - The temple leader's wanted to kill Him, understanding that this man claimed to be God.
 - The priests mocked Him as a failed savior, not realizing that they were witnesses to the greatest sacrifice.

Two Romans and two Criminals answer as well:

- Luke 23:3-4,14-15
- Luke 23:39-43
- Luke 23:36
- Matt 27:50-54
- Pontius Pilate, Roman Prefect of Judea, said he found no fault in this man and wanted to release Him.
 - One criminal railed at Him, but the other saw righteousness and remembered what he had heard, and asked for mercy (and got it!!!).
 - The soldiers first mocked him. But when He died, the signs that followed shook everyone present. The callous centurions caught a glimmer of who He truly was.

What do the Apostles say?

- John 1:1, 14
- 1st Timothy 3:16
- Colossians 2:8-9
- Colossians 1:15
- Hebrews 1:1-3
- 1st Timothy 2:5
- 2nd Cor 5:19
- The Apostle John calls Jesus the Word or Logos of God. This was an important Greek idea, almost a religion in its day. John transforms this idea and applies it to Jesus.
 - The mystery of the incarnation, God manifest in the flesh.
 - Don't follow the philosophies of this world, but follow Christ, in Him dwell the fullness of the Godhead bodily.
 - He is the image of the invisible God.
 - The brightness of His glory, the Son is the express image of the person of God.
 - The mediator between God & us, the man Christ Jesus.
 - God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself.

What does God Himself say about Who Jesus is?

- John 3:16
- Matthew 3:11-17
- Jesus is the greatest expression of love that God could show this world. God made a son, uniquely God himself in the flesh, to come and die for our sins.
 - God gives a very specific and supernatural stamp of approval on the ministry and message of Jesus Christ. This is no ordinary man, and everyone present there recognized the divine uniqueness and anointing of God.

What does Jesus say about Who Jesus is?

- John 8:24-27
- Jesus applies the Old Testament title of “I am” to Himself, speaking of the Father. This was a way of speaking reserved only for God.
- Exodus 3:14
- God declares His name to Moses, the phrase I Am and the longer version I Am That I Am, are both directly connected to God’s name of Yahweh (or Jehovah).
- John 8:58
- If that wasn’t clear enough, He gets very specific in v58. Jesus applies the OT Yahweh name for God to Himself. (Multiple places in John record the I Am claim)
- John 10:30-33
- He equates Himself with the Father. They are one. And the Jews present completely understood His claim.
- John 14:8-10
- Show us the Father, He is right here in me!!!
-

C.S. Lewis, Christian Theologian and Apologist, gave a series of BBC Radio Talks over the radio in London during WWII. The transcripts combined were published in the now Christian classic, *Mere Christianity*. Lewis talked often to people who believed Jesus was a great human teacher, and he made this (now famous) challenge on the radio:

"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 was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on the 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. ... Now it seems to me obvious that He was neither a lunatic nor a fiend: and consequently, however strange or terrifying or unlikely it may seem, I have to accept the view that He was and is God."

- We've looked at this question from every possible way. The Bible paints a clear and consistent answer. Jesus was a unique man, God shown in the flesh, come to show us how to live and then to die for our sins.
 - **You need to answer to this question for yourself. Who is He to you?**
-