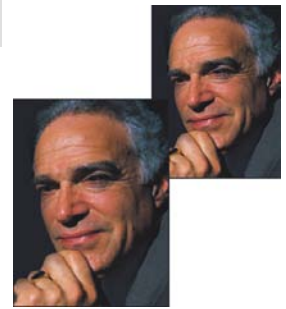


Study Three

Who Is Jesus Christ?

Please write your name above and fill in the Bible references in the spaces provided.



You have travelled to Jerusalem in an imaginary time machine (Study1), and everyone is speaking about Jesus of Nazareth. As you listen to them, you are genuinely surprised that He can provoke such strong feelings of hostility in some, and at the same time win the loving devotion, and even worship, of others. One thing is clear as you watch Him for yourself. Here is a person who is remarkably kind, forthright and courageous!

In the two previous studies we saw what Jesus taught, and discovered what he was like. We shall now examine who Jesus is, and we shall begin by considering His miracles.

What The Miracles Of Jesus Show

Everywhere around us are signs – and they all have a meaning of some kind. The sign on your left tells drivers to take care, as men are working on the roads. 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 to walk and the blind to see.¹ 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.

THE MEANING OF THE SIGNS JESUS DID

The miracles of Jesus were to confirm the things He said about Himself.² They were signs to show that He really was, in a unique sense, God’s Son.

Look up John 20:30-31

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God called the Messiah His Son, through the mouth of the Angel Gabriel, when His birth was announced, see Luke 1:26-35. The precise identity of the Messiah will become clear as you study further. The idea that God had sexual relations in order for Jesus to be born, is not found in the Bible and is repulsive to Christians.



Signs have a meaning

The miracles of Jesus were signs

Jesus was not only a man



Gabriel's Important Announcement

¹ Matthew 15:30-31.

² John 10:25 and Acts 2:22.

WHY JESUS GAVE SIGNS

No one should need a sign to believe.³ Jesus did miracles so that they would have no excuse for their *unbelief*. Read John 15:22-24.

Now there is no excuse

Write out verse 24

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

What Others Said About Him

THE CURIOSITY OF THE CROWDS

Vast numbers gathered to hear Jesus and be healed. **Look up Luke 5:15**

He drew great crowds

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THE OPINIONS OF SOME

For various views about Jesus read Matthew 16:13-16. **Write out verse 16**

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.....

For other people's attitude see the footnotes below.⁴



peacocks

What Jesus Said About Himself

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 men to God, but Jesus directed people to Himself. He declared Himself to be the way to God, and the solution to man's greatest needs. No wonder some found His language blasphemous and insulting to God. They were forced to either believe Him, or condemn Him!



Either Jesus was mad or telling the truth.

³ Matthew 12:38-39 and John 20:29.

⁴ Opposing attitudes (John 7:12); Devotion (Matthew 26:7); Worship (Matthew 14:33).

Jesus claimed to be the Bread of Life, Light of the World, and Door of Salvation.⁵ He also claimed to be the Way to God. **Look up John 14:6**

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THE CLAIM TO HAVE PRE-EXISTED

Jesus spoke of a time, before the world was created, when He lived with God. **Look up John 17:5**

Before time began

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He implied that He existed before Abraham – a man who lived as long before Jesus, as we do after Him.⁶

THE CLAIM TO BE GOD'S SON

Finally, by calling God His Father, Jesus claimed to be God's Son in a special sense. He was claiming the honour due to God. **Look up John 5:18**

The Son of Almighty God

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To claim such honour Jesus has to be God in human form. Human beings will never be able to understand the nature of the infinite God completely. We need to accept what He has revealed of Himself. He is all-powerful: He is certainly able to take a human form and live in this world. The rest of this course shows why He chose to do that.

Forming An Opinion Of Your Own

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. **Look up Acts 2:32**



Weighing the evidence

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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.

⁵ John 6:35, John 8:12, John 10:9.

⁶ John 8:56-58.

Something more to weigh

Jesus angered many people by declaring a person's sins forgiven. It implied that He was God. Read Luke 5:18-21. **Write out verses 20 and 21**

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Seeing the heart

It also implied that Jesus could read a person's heart, and know when he or she was genuinely sorry.⁷

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. Read Luke 1:26-35. **Write out verse 35**

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Is anything too hard for the *Almighty* God?

This also sets Jesus apart as being very different to other men. It suggests that He is much more than a man – that He is also God.⁸

so FINALLY

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.

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?⁹

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

⁷ For another incident see Luke 7:36-50.

⁸ Matthew 1:23 (Note the phrase "God with us").

⁹ John 20:28.