

CHAPTER 6

The Claims of Christ

(Who Did Christ Claim to Be?)

Who Is Jesus? What Do Men Say? (Matthew 16:13-14)

Men have had all kinds of different ideas about who Jesus really is. Read Matthew 16:13-14. In the days when our Lord walked this earth, there were people who thought that Jesus was _____ . Others thought He was _____ . Some thought that He was _____ , and others thought that He was one of the _____ .

His enemies said that He was a madman who was possessed by a _____ (John 10:20). They accused Him of performing His miracles by the power of Satan (Matthew 12:22-26; Mark 3:22). They called Him a S _____ (John 8:48), which to the Jews was a most hateful and insulting term. They also thought of Him as a **blasphemer** (Matthew 9:3; 26:65)—a mere man who claimed to be equal with God and therefore a man who was worthy of death (compare John 10:33; John 19:7; Leviticus 24:16). Was Jesus merely a man, or was He more?

People today also have many ideas about who Jesus really was (and is)! Some say that He was a great Teacher. Others believe He was a famous Prophet. Some promote the idea that He was Jesus Christ the "**Superstar**" (but remember, many mere men are recognized as superstars, such as great athletes and famous performers). Some might even say that Jesus was the most righteous and perfect man who ever lived, but they believe He was only a man.

If you were to ask your friends for their ideas of who Christ was, what might they say?

What might your school teachers say? What might other adults say?

Nothing is more important than a person's concept of who Jesus really is. If I truly believe Jesus Christ is Almighty God, then I will "bow down before Him, love and adore Him" (as the song says). If I really believe He is Lord, then I'll serve and obey Him. If I believe He is a liar, then I'll never trust Him. If I believe He's a madman, then I'll never come to Him. If I make Him my "Superstar," then soon another superstar will come along for me to idolize. If He was only a good teacher, then I'll consider what He says, but I'll also read and believe what other good teachers say. If He was only a Prophet, then I will be looking for other prophets to show me the way to God. If He were a mere man who died 2000 years ago, then He is still dead with no power to change my life today.

**Who Is Jesus?
What Did Jesus Say?
(Mark 14:61-62)**

Jesus, in many ways, seemed to be like any other man of His day. His physical appearance was not unusual, and He certainly resembled other Jewish men who then lived in Palestine. He did **not** have a glowing light or a halo around His head (as some paintings suggest), nor did He have long, flowing hair which made Him look different from His disciples and the other men of His day. In age, He appeared to be about 30 years old (compare Luke 3:23 and John 8:57). The Jews did not think of Jesus as someone who had come down from heaven, but rather they thought of Him merely as one who had come from the family of Joseph (John 6:41-42; compare Matthew 13:55-56). *And yet, this man made the most amazing and astonishing claims.* Let us consider some of these important claims:

1) Jesus Claimed to be the Messiah, God's Anointed King!

The Jews who knew their Old Testament Scriptures would have understood that the promised Messiah was none other than (please MATCH):

- | | | |
|-------------|--|---------------------|
| 1)
_____ | The King whose Name is
the MIGHTY GOD | (A) Isaiah 7:14 |
| 2)
_____ | The King whose Name is
THE LORD (Jehovah) | (B) Isaiah 9:6-7 |
| 3)
_____ | The King who is the
ETERNAL,
EVERLASTING GOD | (C) Jeremiah 23:5-6 |
| 4)
_____ | The King who will be
born of a virgin and
called IMMANUEL (God
with us) | (D) Daniel 7:13-14 |
| 5)
_____ | The King who will reign
forever and ever | (E) Micah 5:2 |

When a man claimed to be the **Messiah**, it was as if he were saying, "I want you all to know that I am God's promised King, the One who is the eternal and mighty Jehovah-God, who shall reign forever and ever!" That's quite a claim!

What is another term, used frequently in the New Testament, which means the very same thing as "Messiah" (John 1:41)? _____ When Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, "I...AM HE!", who was He claiming to be (see John 4:25-26)? _____ In John 10:24, what did the Jews want Christ to tell them so they would no longer have any doubts in their mind? _____ Do you think these Jews got their answer (read John 10:26-33)? _____ According to His enemies, did Jesus ever claim to be the Messiah (see Luke 23:2,35)? _____

2) Jesus Claimed to be the Son of God!

Did Jesus ever say, "I am the Son of God!" (see John 10:36)? _____ When the man who was born blind asked Jesus, "Who is the Son of God?" what answer did Jesus give (see John 9:35-38)? _____ Was Peter rebuked for saying the wrong thing in Matthew 16:22 (see verse 23)? _____ Was Peter rebuked for saying the wrong thing in Matthew 16:16 (see verse 17)? _____ According to His enemies at the foot of the cross, what claim had Jesus made (Matthew 27:43)? _____ When the high priest asked, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the **Blessed One** (God)?" what answer did Jesus give (Mark 14:61-62)? _____ Compare Matthew 26:63-66 and Luke 22:70-71.

Some people might say, "It's true that Jesus claimed to be God's Son, but He never claimed to be God." But how did the Jews understand the expression "Son of God"? What did it mean to them?

If a man said that God was His Father (thus claiming to be the Son of God), he would be making himself _____ (John 5:18). Thus in the days of Christ, the title, "Son of God" was understood to mean "equality with God" (having the same nature and attributes as God). According to Jewish law (Lev. 24:16), what should be done to any mere man who claims to be the Son of God (John 19:7; compare John 5:18; 10:31-33)? _____

Note: Jesus did not usually refer to Himself as the Messiah or as the Son of God, though on certain occasions He certainly claimed to be such. The title that He most frequently applied to Himself was "the Son of man" (see Luke 5:24; 6:5; 7:34; 9:22,56,58; 11:30; 12:40; 17:30; 19:10; etc.). The significance of this term is seen in the fact that Daniel used it to describe the Messiah who would return to establish an everlasting kingdom (Daniel 7:13-14). In His trial, Jesus referred to this very passage (Matthew 26:64) which so infuriated the Jews (Matthew 26:65) and led to His crucifixion (Matthew 26:66).

3) Jesus Claimed to be Equal With God.

We have already seen that to claim to be the Son of God is to claim equality with God (John 5:18). What astonishing claim did Jesus make in John 10:30?

_____ What did the Jews think of this claim (John 10:31)? _____ Why did the Jews want to kill Jesus (John 10:33)? _____ What was His great crime (see John 10:33)? _____ According to John 10:33, how did the Jews define the word "blasphemy"? _____ Was this the reason Christ was put on the cross (Mark 14:64; Matthew 26:65-66; John 19:7)? _____

4) Jesus Claimed to be Able to Forgive Sins.

What did Jesus say to the paralytic man that so astonished the Jews (Mark 2:5)?

_____ The only person who can really forgive us is _____

the person we have offended and sinned against. If I punch you in the nose, I must go to you for forgiveness because you are the one who has been offended and hurt. When we sin, who is the Person we always offend (Psalm 51:4)? _____ Who then is the only Person who can forgive us? _____ Did the Jews understand this (Mark 2:7)? _____ Would it be blasphemy for a **mere** man to claim to forgive sins? _____ If Christ could really forgive sins (and He proved that He could by the healing miracle—see Mark 2:9-12), then who must He be? _____ [Note: On a human level, we can forgive someone who offends us or who sins against us, but on a higher level, only God can forgive sins. The kind of forgiveness that is needed for salvation can come only from God.]

5) Jesus Claimed to be Jehovah.

In the Old Testament, the divine name "LORD" (spelled with all capital letters) is the Hebrew word "JEHOVAH" (or "YAHWEH"). Sometimes this same word is spelled "GOD" (all capital letters). To the Jews, this was the most sacred name of God (so sacred that they would not even pronounce it; they still do not pronounce it in synagogues today when the Hebrew Scriptures are read).

According to Psalm 23:1, who is the Shepherd? _____ According to Jesus in John 10:11,14, who is the Good Shepherd _____? Does this help you to understand why many of the Jews were so upset after hearing the Lord speak about who the Good Shepherd really is (John 10:20)?

According to Isaiah 41:4 and 44:6, who is the First and the Last? _____ According to Revelation 1:13,17-18; 2:8, who is the First and the Last? _____

According to Psalm 18:2, who is the Rock? _____ According to 1 Corinthians 10:4, who is the Rock? _____

According to Jeremiah 31:34, who is the Forgiver of Sins? _____ According to Mark 2:7,10, who is the Forgiver of Sins? _____

Did Jesus claim to be Jehovah? _____

6) Jesus Claimed to be the Final Judge of All Men!

Does anyone apart from God have the right to Judge men and to send some men to hell to be punished forever (compare James 4:12)? _____ Did Jesus claim this right (John 5:22,27; Matthew 25:31-46)? _____ If Jesus were a mere man, would such a claim be blasphemy (compare John 10:33)? _____

7) Jesus Claimed to be the Great "I Am"—The Eternally Existent God!

What question did the Jews ask Jesus in John 8:57?

When did Abraham live (circle the correct answer)?

- A. **4000 years before Christ**
- B. **3000 years before Christ**
- C. **2000 years before Christ**
- D. **1000 years before Christ**

(Your teacher may need to help you with this answer.)

How did Jesus answer their question (John 8:58)?

_____ Today, if a man who appeared to be 30 years old were to come up to you and claim to be over 2000 years old, what would you think? What did the Jews think of the Lord's astonishing answer (John 8:59)?

When Jesus said, "I AM" (John 8:58), this was very significant to the Jews who heard Him. They recognized "I AM" as a sacred name of God as revealed to Moses in Exodus 3:14-15:

" _____ THAT _____: Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, _____ hath sent me unto you."

Throughout the Gospel of John, Jesus claimed to be the Great "I AM":

- John 6:35: _____
- John 8:12: _____
- John 10:9: _____
- John 10:11: _____
- John 11:25: _____
- John 14:6: _____
- etc.

Why did John write the gospel of John (John 20:31)? _____

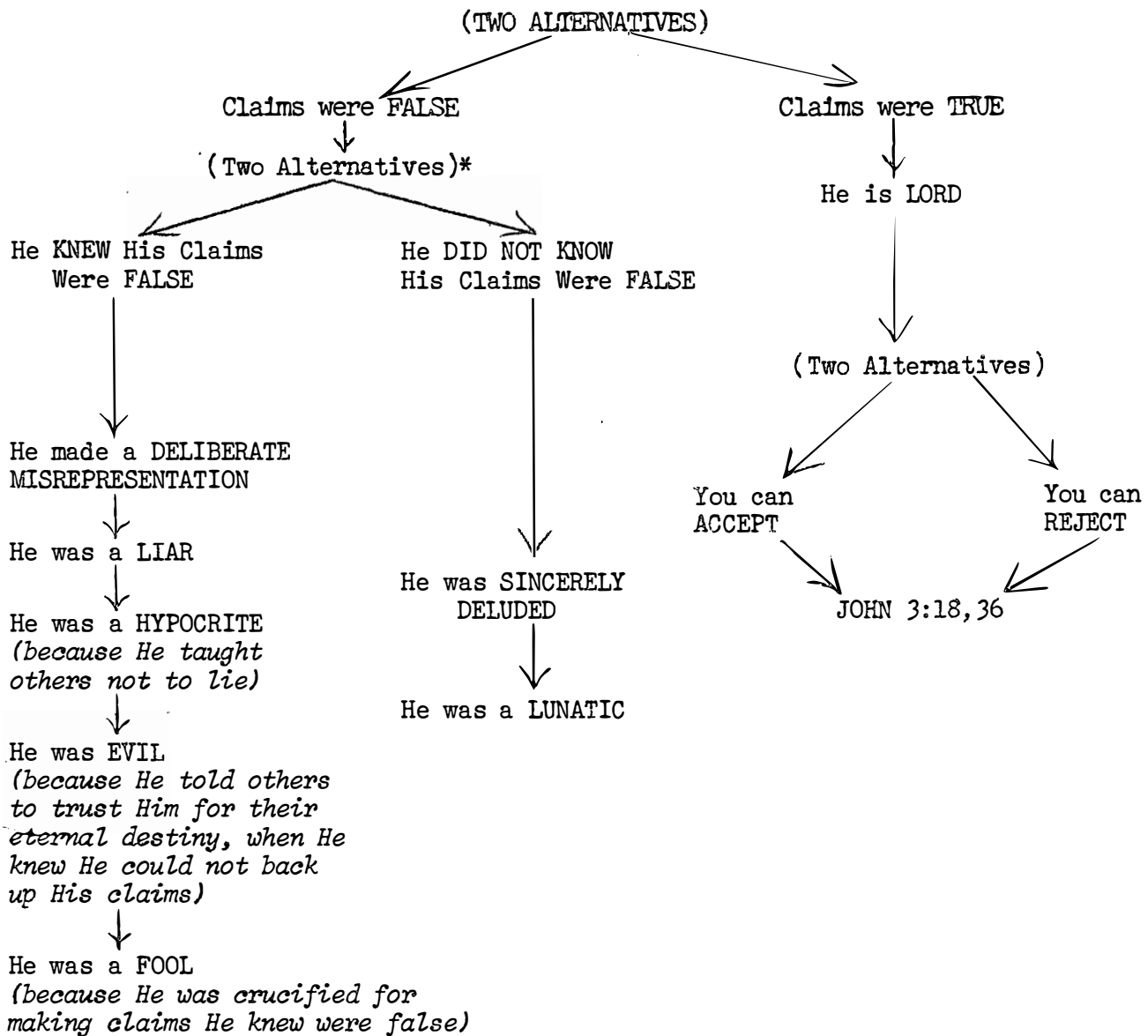
**Who Is Jesus?
What Do You Say?
(Matthew 16:15)**

In Matthew 16:15 the Lord Jesus asked His disciples the most important question, "But who say _____ that I am?" Who do **YOU** think Christ is? **Your eternal destiny depends on how you answer that question!!!**

Actually, there are only three honest answers (and only one true answer!) that can be given.

Either Jesus was a **LIAR**, a **LUNATIC** or He was **LORD**. See the chart below. This chart is taken and adapted from Josh McDowell's book, *Evidence That Demands A Verdict*, page 108.

Jesus Claims To Be God



*Concerning these two alternatives, Thiessen wrote: "If He is a deceiver, or is self-deceived, and, in either case, if He is not God He is not good" (Thiessen, *Outline of Lectures in Systematic Theology*, p. 65)

The above chart is adapted from Evidence that Demands a Verdict, by Josh McDowell, p. 108.

It is foolish and dishonest to accept any other alternative. For example, many people say that Jesus was a great Teacher, but they deny that He was GOD. Consider 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 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 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. (*Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis, p. 56). Note: Although we agree with this quote by C. S. Lewis, and find it very helpful, this is not an endorsement of his views in general.

Was Jesus a Liar, Lunatic or Lord?

- What was Thomas' conclusion (John 20:28)? _____
- What was Peter's conclusion (Matt. 16:16; Acts 2:36)? _____
- What was Paul's conclusion (Tit. 2:13; Rom. 9:5)? _____
- What was John's conclusion (1 John 5:20)? _____
- What was the writer of Hebrews' conclusion (Heb. 1:8)? _____
- What was Stephen's conclusion (Acts 7:59)? _____
- What was God the Father's conclusion (Matt. 3:17; 17:5)? _____

WHAT IS YOUR CONCLUSION?

Who is Jesus? I believe Jesus is (fill in the rest)

*"In the beginning God created the heaven
and the earth" (Genesis 1:1)*

What a sublime introduction to the
inspired Scriptures! In John 1:3 and
Colossians 1:16 this Creator is identified
as none other than the Lord Jesus Christ!

*"The Maker of the universe
As Man, for man was made a curse.
The claims of Law which He had made,
Unto the uttermost He paid.*

*His holy fingers made the bough
Which grew the thorns that crowned
His brow.
The nails that pierced His hands were mined
In secret places He designed.*

*He made the forest whence there sprung
The tree on which His body hung.
He died upon a cross of wood,
Yet made the hill on which it stood.*

*The sky that darkened o'er His head
By Him above the earth was spread.
The sun that hid from Him its face
By His decree was poised in space.*

*The spear which spilled His precious blood
Was tempered in the fires of God.
The grave in which His form was laid,
Was hewn in rocks His hands had made,*

*The throne on which He now appears
Was His from everlasting years,
But a new glory crowns His brow,
And every knee to Him shall bow."*

--F. W. Pitt.

*"WELL MIGHT THE SUN IN DARKNESS HIDE,
AND SHUT HIS GLORIES IN,
WHEN CHRIST, THE MIGHTY MAKER, DIED
FOR MAN, THE CREATURE'S SIN" Isaac Watts*