

## **Who is Jesus of Nazareth?**

Matthew 16:13-16

From the moment of Jesus' birth until this very day, humanity has been grappling with this question; who is Jesus of Nazareth? Most of us think and believe we can avoid this question but the fact is it's unavoidable.

When we consider the basic facts about Jesus' life, the vast impact He has had is nothing short of incredible. A nineteenth century writer put it this way:

Jesus was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another village, where He worked as a carpenter until He was 30. Then for three years He was an itinerant preacher. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never had a family or owned a home. He didn't go to college. He never visited a big city. He never traveled two hundred miles from the place where he was born. He did none of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but Himself.

He was only 33 when the tide of public opinion turned against Him. His friends ran away. One of them denied Him. He was turned over to His enemies and went through a mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a cross between two thieves. While He was dying, His executioners gambled for His garments, the only property He had on earth. When He was dead, He was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend. Nineteen centuries have come and gone, and today He is the central figure of the human race.

All the armies that have marched, all the navies that have sailed, all the parliaments that have sat, all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man on this earth as much as that one solitary life.

Read Matthew 16:13-16

Not everyone accepts Peter's answer, but no one should avoid Jesus' question. There can only be three categories to place Jesus into. He is either a Liar, Lunatic, or He is Lord. Let's take a look at each of them.

**Was He A Liar?**

If, when Jesus made His claims, He knew He was not God, then He was lying. But if He was a liar then He was also a hypocrite, because He told others to be honest, whatever the cost, while He, at the same time was teaching and living a colossal lie. More than that, He was a demon, because He deliberately told others to trust Him for their eternal destiny. If He could not back up His claims and knew they were false, then He was unspeakably evil. And lastly, He would also be a fool, because it was his claims to be God that led to His crucifixion.

Mark 14: 61-64

If Jesus was a liar, a con man, and therefore evil, and a foolish man, then how can we explain the fact that He left us with the most profound moral instruction and powerful moral example that anyone has ever left? Could a deceiver, an imposter of monstrous proportions teach such unselfish ethical truth and live such a morally exemplary life as Jesus did?

Someone who lived as Jesus lived, taught as Jesus taught, and died as Jesus died could not have been a liar. So let's look at the next alternative.

### **Was He a Lunatic?**

If it is inconceivable for Jesus to have been a liar, then could He have thought He was God but have been mistaken? After all, it is possible to be both sincere and wrong.

Almost no one who has read the Gospels can honestly and seriously consider this option. His deep and winning love, His passionate compassion, His ability to attract people and make them feel at home and forgiven, His authority and His ability to astonish are reasons enough to know that no one who knows both the Gospels and human beings can seriously entertain the possibility that Jesus was a liar or a lunatic.

If Jesus of Nazareth is not a liar or a lunatic, then He must **Be Lord**.

Matthew 16:16 Peter said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Martha said of Jesus in John 11:27 "Yes Lord, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into this world."

After seeing Jesus raised from the grave Thomas said, "My Lord and my God."

Hebrews 1:3 says, "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by His powerful word."

Who you decide Jesus Christ is must not be an idle intellectual exercise. You cannot put him on a moral shelf as a great moral teacher. He is a liar, a lunatic, or Lord. You must make a choice. But, as the apostle John wrote, "These have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." And more importantly, "that believing you may have life in His name."

Now that we answered the question who Jesus is, the next question is why do you need him?

The answer is simple; you can't do anything about your sin problem. There are many things as humans we can do, such as, change bad habits, try to be a little more kinder to people, show more compassion, or even become an inspiration to others but there is nothing we can do on our own that will erase the stain of sin from our lives. We've tried. We do good works, we say idle prayers, we light candles, and try to be a good descent person, but at the end of the day it all falls short. Romans 3 says "There is none good no not one."

The only way we can be truly be cleansed of our sins and made right before the Father is by the precious blood of Jesus. 1 Peter 1:18-21 says, " For you know it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. Through Him you believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and glorified Him, and so your faith and hope are in God."

So if this is true then how do you receive forgiveness?

Romans 10: 9-10, 13 "IF you confess with your mouth, Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."