

“Who do You Say I am?”

Introduction

I am so thrilled to have you join me in this study of Jesus. There is no one like him, never was, never will be. As we discussed in our meeting Jesus pre-existed creation! He was there, the Word, issuing forth a command and the universe swirled into existence. Nothing was made that he did not call into existence, and everything that was created was for his joy. If that were not enough, he stepped down from eternal heaven and in to finite time as a tiny baby dependent upon his loving mother and earthly father for his very protection. He who is life and caused life needed his parents to protect his young, precious life. Throughout this study we will be exploring the defining moments in the life of Jesus that cause us to pause and exclaim, “This is no ordinary man, this Jesus – *he is extraordinary, he’s man, he is God, he is our salvation!*”

The Lord has given me a special mission in bringing each one of you closer to him, to be the one to take you by the hand and say, “Jesus knows who you are, and He wants you to know him! Come with me and we will find him together in the pages of his Word.” I am called to lead all of you who are willing to spend the time in the word of God to a closer, deeper relationship with Jesus. A few years ago I did an in-depth study of Jesus and it transformed my relationship with him. It is my sincere prayer to bring *you* to that same place with him.

The episodes, teachings and parables chosen for this study all point to who Jesus is. Because our lesson is only ten weeks in length, we won’t be able to cover every account recorded in all four gospels. Instead we will be looking at those that relate to the focus of our study, the scope of which are the accounts of the birth of Jesus up until the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem. In each account that we will be studying, we will see that Jesus’ identity causes an astonishing reaction from those around him. As we look at each episode, watch for what is revealed about Jesus, and the underlying reason for each individual’s response to him. Over the next 10 weeks we are taking Jesus’ question directed to Peter (Matt 16:15), “*Who do you say I am?*” as well as the preceding question “*Who do people say the Son of Man is?*”(v13) and applying them to the assigned scripture readings. As we work through the readings also keep in mind who wrote the gospel the selection is from, who the audience was, and the purpose behind the author’s gospel. During our introductory session we discussed each of these very important

keys to understanding each gospel. Keeping them in mind (or close at hand!) will help you to unlock the truth and purpose of each selection.

Each week in our class meeting we will discuss the previous week's homework, focusing mainly on the discussion questions marked with ∞. After the homework discussion we will take a close look at either an event in Jesus' life that comes up in the next week's homework, or I will provide historical background information that will help us better place upcoming scripture readings in context. (If you have missed the lecture presented during the class, notes are available on-line and listed as "Lesson Notes". The lesson notes cover the majority of the material presented in class.) Homework packets will be handed out at the end of each class meeting and are also available on-line.

Homework will be a handful of passages that either chronologically follow each other, or are thematically related. Before reading each selection, spend a few minutes in prayer asking the Lord to help you understand what he would have you learn (and share!) from each passage. You may uncover a truth that I or others missed! (It's been known to happen!) Read the selected passage and answer the questions that follow. The first few questions will be straight forward from the reading itself designed to inspire careful reading of details, and to point in the direction of why the passage was chosen. The next few questions will require more thought, perhaps a link to another related passage, and will require you to come to some kind of conclusion related to the scriptures. Among these questions will likely be a marked discussion question that will be covered in our next meeting. Complete the homework as best as you can, and best as your time allows! God will surely bless you for whatever time you put into your homework. Even if your week (heaven forbid!) doesn't allow you to complete (or even start – now I'm scandalized!) your homework, come to our weekly meeting anyway. You will still benefit from our discussions and hopefully be encouraged to stick with it!

One of the things I have discovered in studying the Bible is that the more I do it, the more I crave it! When I am not in the Word of God for any length of time, short or long, I desperately miss it. I feel out of touch with the One I most adore, I long for Him, and when I get back into his Word I am refreshed, renewed, and I know I have been missed, too! Spending time with Jesus is the most important thing we can do for ourselves and our loved ones. His influence emanates from us and affects those around us. Through us we spread his light to the world. *Lord, let each one of us be a beacon drawing those in the dark closer to you!*