

Who Do You Say Jesus Is?

¹⁵ Then He asked them, "But who do you say I am?" ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of the living God."

¹⁷ Jesus replied, "You are blessed, Simon son of John, because my Father in heaven has revealed this to you. You did not learn this from any human being."
— Matthew 16:15-17(NLT)

Isaiah 44:6-8 (NLT)

⁶ This is what the Lord says — Israel's King and Redeemer, the Lord of Heaven's Armies: "I am the First and the Last; there is no other God. ⁷ Who is like me? Let him step forward and prove to you his power. Let him do as I have done since ancient times when I established a people and explained its future. ⁸ Do not tremble; do not be afraid. Did I not proclaim my purposes for you long ago? You are my witnesses — is there any other God? No! There is no other Rock—not one!"

Isaiah 48:17 (NIV)

This is what the Lord says — your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go."

Mark 8:27-30 (NIV)

²⁷ Jesus and His disciples left Galilee and went up to the villages near Caesarea Philippi. As they were walking along, He asked them, "Who do people say I am?"

²⁸ "Well," they replied, "some say John the Baptist, some say Elijah, and others say you are one of the other prophets."

²⁹ Then He asked them, "But who do you say I am?" [emphasis added] Peter replied, "You are the Messiah."

³⁰ But Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

John 4:19-26 (NLT)

¹⁹ "Sir," the woman said, "you must be a prophet. ²⁰ So tell me, why is it that you Jews insist that Jerusalem is the only place of worship, while we Samaritans claim it is here at Mount Gerizim, where our ancestors worshiped?"

²¹ Jesus replied, "Believe me, dear woman, the time is coming when it will no longer matter whether you worship the Father on this mountain or in Jerusalem. ²² You Samaritans know very little about the one you worship, while we Jews know all about Him, for salvation comes through the Jews. ²³ But the time is coming — indeed it's here now — when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for those who will worship Him that way. ²⁴ For God is Spirit, so those who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth."

²⁵ The woman said, "I know the Messiah is coming — the one who is called Christ. When He comes, He will explain everything to us."

²⁶ Then Jesus told her, "I am the Messiah!"

John 11:20-27 (NLT)

²⁰ When Martha got word that Jesus was coming, she went to meet Him. But Mary stayed in the house.

²¹ Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask."

²³ Jesus told her, "Your brother will rise again."

²⁴ "Yes," Martha said, "he will rise when everyone else rises, at the last day."

²⁵ Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying. ²⁶ Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die. Do you believe this, Martha?"

²⁷ "Yes, Lord," she told Him. "I have always believed you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who

has come into the world from God."

Message

"Who Do You Say Jesus Is?"

Elizabeth Daniel

Research Notes for "Who Do You Say Jesus Is?"

First Century Expectation of the Messiah

- Expectations were not uniform, and different groups emphasized different roles for the "Anointed One" — Miracle Workers vs. Military Leaders. Some people looked specifically for a miracle worker who would heal the sick, while others focused solely on a political or military leader.
- In the first century, the Jewish people lived under intense Roman occupation, which fueled a "fever pitch" of messianic expectation.
- While specific understandings varied among different groups, there was a widespread longing for a deliverer who would restore Israel's national independence and glory.
- The Kingly Messiah (Son of David)
 - a royal descendant of David
 - a military and political hero who would overthrow Roman rule, crushing Israel's oppressors, and driving the pagan Romans out of Israel
 - a leader to rebuild the kingdom of David and rule all nations from Jerusalem in prosperity
 - a leader to establish a righteous reign and enforce the observance of the Law of Moses
- The Prophetic Messiah
 - an eschatological (last things; end times) prophet to announce God's final judgment or redemption
 - a prophet like Moses (based on Deut 18:18)
 - the return of Elijah (Malachi 4:5)
 - leader promising miraculous signs of deliverance
- The Priestly and Heavenly Messiah
 - Expectations among more scholarly or sectarian groups, like the Essenes at Qumran, sometimes included more complex figures.
 - Some expected two distinct messianic figures: a priestly Messiah (the "Messiah of Aaron") and a royal Messiah (the "Messiah of Israel").
 - Based on Daniel 7:13-14, there was a concept of a heavenly, cosmic figure "like a son of man" who would receive an everlasting kingdom and dominion from God.
 - This figure was associated with the end-time judgment of world empires.
- The "Hidden" Messiah
 - The Messiah would be a hidden figure of unknown origin who would appear suddenly to effect redemption.
 - This led some in Jerusalem to doubt Jesus' messiahship because they believed they knew his family and place of origin.
- Key Misunderstandings and Contrasts
 - They did NOT expect a Suffering Messiah
 - They had almost no concept of a Messiah who would suffer, die, and atone for sins.
 - The idea of a "crucified Messiah" was considered a contradiction in terms—a "stumbling block" and a scandal.
 - Most expected an immediate, visible transformation of the earthly political order.
 - Jesus' emphasis on a spiritual kingdom present in His own ministry was "unexpected" and often "puzzling" even to His closest disciples.

Jesus' Teachings Challenged the Expectation of a Kingly Messiah

- Jesus' teachings fundamentally challenged the Kingly Messiah expectations by redefining the nature of the kingdom, the character of the king, and the path to messianic glory.
 - While most looked for a royal descendant of David to act as a military and political hero who would

overthrow Roman rule and restore national prosperity, Jesus presented a vision that was often the polar opposite of these popular hopes.

- A Spiritual and Present Kingdom
 - The most common expectation was for an immediate, visible transformation of the earthly political order.
 - Jesus challenged this by teaching that the Kingdom of God was already present in His own ministry and person.
 - Jesus explicitly told Pilate that his kingdom was "not of this world".
 - If it were a political kingdom, His followers would have fought to prevent His arrest.
 - He taught that the kingdom does not come with visible political marks; rather, it is within the peoples' hearts.
 - Instead of a sudden military conquest, He used parables like the mustard seed and leaven to show the kingdom's gradual, pervasive growth.
- Leadership as Servanthood
 - Traditional expectations of a Kingly Messiah focused on military prowess and "mighty men of war", Jesus inverted this model entirely.
 - The Servant-King: He redefined greatness as humble service, stating that the "Son of Man came not to be served but to serve".
 - He taught His disciples that to be "first," they must be "last" and the "slave of all," a concept that directly contradicted the Greco-Roman and popular Jewish values of power and status.
 - He used the image of a child — someone without social status or power — as the requirement for entering the kingdom, challenging those who sought political leader.
- The Necessity of Suffering and Death
 - Perhaps the most unexpected and puzzling aspect of Jesus' teaching was His insistence that the Messiah must suffer and die.
 - The idea of a crucified Messiah was considered a contradiction in terms — a scandal and a "stumbling block" to Jews who associated messiahship with triumph and splendor.
 - His crucifixion was his path to merge the royal "Son of Man" imagery from Daniel with the "Suffering Servant" of Isaiah 53.
 - While the people wanted deliverance from Rome, Jesus taught that His primary mission was to save His people from their sins.
- Redefining Messianic Authority
 - Jesus challenged (1) the adequacy of current messianic titles and (2) the traditional interpretation of the Law.
 - He questioned the scribal habit of calling the Messiah merely the "Son of David."
 - Citing Psalm 110:1, He argued that since David called the Messiah "Lord," the Messiah must be a more exalted, divine figure than a mere earthly descendant.
 - He deliberately fulfilled Zechariah 9:9 by entering Jerusalem on a donkey rather than a war horse, signaling He was a king of peace rather than a warlord or conquering hero.
 - He claimed an authority that surpassed the Temple and traditional interpretations of the Sabbath, teaching that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.
- Confusion and Rejection
 - Because the prevailing expectation was for a political and military liberator, many—including Jesus' own disciples—were confused by his humble approach.
 - Jesus was an unexpected Messiah because His mission focused on spiritual redemption from sin and death rather than immediate political freedom from Rome.
 - Religious leaders struggled to recognize Him as the Messiah because they could not reconcile His miracles and claims with their own interpretations of the Davidic King.

How did Jesus respond to political messianic expectations?

Jesus responded to first-century political messianic expectations by consistently redirecting them toward a spiritual and eternal kingdom rather than a nationalistic or military one

. While most Jews expected a descendant of David who would be a military hero and liberate Israel from Roman occupation, Jesus was an "unexpected Messiah" who focused on liberation from sin and death

- Redefining the Kingdom
 - Jesus' emphasized the Kingdom of God was not a visible political entity to be established by force.
 - He taught the kingdom was already present in His miracles and ministry but would only reach its fullness in the future.
 - When questioned about when the kingdom would come, Jesus stated it was already in the hearts of those who made God their Lord.
 - Unlike the expected restoration of a human kingdom with specific national borders, Jesus' restoration was borderless and included all people — Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor.
- Symbolic Rejection of Military Power
 - Jesus used specific actions to contrast His mission with the military expectations of a conquering king.
 - While the crowds hailed him as the "King of Israel" and waved palm branches (a Sukkot custom identifying Him with a reigning king), Jesus chose to ride a donkey, fulfilling Zech 9:9 as a king who is humble and peaceful rather than a warrior on a horse.
 - While those around Him shouted "Hosanna" (save us now), Jesus was humble, because He knew the people were missing the true path to peace and would ultimately reject Him.
 - On at least one occasion, when people tried to push Him into a role as a military leader by force, Jesus resisted and withdrew from them.
 - He often warned people not to reveal his identity prematurely because He needed His true nature as a suffering servant to be revealed slowly, countering the "conquering hero" stereotype.
- Redefining Leadership as Servanthood
 - Jesus countered the Roman model of leadership (characterized by power and authority) by teaching that in His kingdom, a leader must have the heart of a servant.
 - He modeled this by washing His disciples' feet and ultimately through His sacrificial death, which He described as a "ransom for many".
 - His kingdom values, expressed in the Beatitudes, prioritized the "poor in spirit," the "meek," and the "peacemakers," which directly conflicted with the worldly desire for might and dominion.

Who is Jesus? (What Scholars and Biblical Students Say)

- Jesus is the central figure of the Christian faith, recognized as the eternal Son of God, the promised Messiah, and the Savior of the world.
- His identity is uniquely defined by the doctrine that He is fully God and fully human, possessing two distinct natures joined in one Person (the Trinity).
- His Divine and Human Identity
 - Fully Divine
 - Jesus is the second Person of the Trinity, coequal with God the Father and the Holy Spirit.
 - He has always existed, was never created, and was active in Creation.
 - Fully Human:
 - Through the Incarnation, God became flesh (human) when Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of Mary.
 - As a human, He experienced physical needs like hunger, thirst, and fatigue, and felt emotions such as sorrow and anguish.

- His genealogy connects Him to human history through ancestors such as Abraham and King David.
- The Name "Jesus" is the Greek form of the Hebrew Yeshua (Joshua), which means "The Lord is salvation" or "The Lord saves".
- Jesus is the fulfillment of 100+ OT prophecies concerning a coming Savior-King.
 - He fulfilled specific predictions, including being born in Bethlehem, being a descendant of David, and being born of a virgin.
- Messiah (Christ) means "Anointed One," referring to someone set apart by God for a specific task.
- "The Suffering Servant:" While many in His time expected a military leader to liberate them from Roman rule, Jesus came as a humble servant to liberate humanity from sin and death.

His Earthly Ministry and Teachings

- During His approximately three-year ministry, Jesus demonstrated His authority through words and deeds.
 - Miracles: He performed breathtaking miracles, such as spontaneously (1) healing the sick, (2) giving sight to the blind, (3) calming stormy seas, and (4) even raising the dead, which authenticated His claim to be the Son of God.
 - Teachings: He preached the arrival of the Kingdom of God, using parables, comparing familiar ideas to spiritual truths.
 - His "Sermon on the Mount" provided core instructions for life in God's kingdom.
 - The Twelve Disciples: He intentionally chose 12 ordinary men to follow Him, whom He trained to be apostles (messengers) to spread the Gospel.
- Sacrifice, Resurrection, and Roles
 - The primary purpose of Jesus' life was to reconcile humanity to God through His death and resurrection.
 - Jesus is the Passover Lamb whose voluntary and sinless sacrifice on the cross paid the penalty for the sins of the world.
 - He is the ultimate High Priest and Mediator who represents humanity before God and intercedes on behalf of believers.
 - Three days after His crucifixion, Jesus rose bodily from the dead, proving He had conquered death and verifying His divine claims.
 - He appeared to more than 400 eyewitnesses over 40 days before ascending to back to God.
 - Jesus is now seated at the right hand of God, where He continues to act as a Mediator.
 - He will return again visibly to judge the world and establish His eternal kingdom.
- The "I Am" Titles
 - In John's Gospel, Jesus used seven metaphors to describe His identity and His relationship to those who follow Him:
 - The Bread of Life: Sustenance for the soul.
 - The Light of the World: Guiding humanity out of spiritual darkness.
 - The Door (or Gate): The only opening to God and everlasting life.
 - The Good Shepherd: The one who cares for and leads His people.
 - The Resurrection and the Life: The source of eternal life.
 - The Way, the Truth, and the Life: The path and destination of faith.
 - The True Vine: The connection on which believers depend for life and growth.

Who is Jesus? (WHAT DO YOU SAY??)

Jesus is

