

Who Does Jesus Think He Is?

Self-identity is who or what a person believes he or she is. Each person has an identity and it is associated with their name. *Psychology Today* magazine gives the following definition.

“Identity encompasses the memories, experiences, relationships, and values that creates one’s sense of self.” <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/identity>

Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Mary, had a self-identity. He had an answer to the question, “Who am I?” In his growing up years in Nazareth he would have easily said he was the son of Joseph and Mary, whose parents in turn were so and so. Naturally Mary and Joseph shared with him at the proper times the events of his birth. From an early age the boy Jesus had a sense of his special relationship to God. The clearest statement of his self-identity is found in his response to Mary and Joseph at the age of 12 when he had stayed behind in the temple engaging with the rabbis and priests in Biblical and theological discussion. After searching for him for 3 days they found him! He was in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them, and asking them questions. ⁴⁷“Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. ⁴⁸When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, ***“Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you.”***

⁴⁹“Why were you searching for me?” he asked. **“Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?”** ⁵⁰But they did not understand what he was saying to them.” Luke 2:49

Jesus knows at this stage that he is the Son of God whom he knows to be his Father in a special sense. Individual Israelites did not think of themselves individually as sons or daughters of God. Later when he taught his disciples to pray, he taught them to pray like this, “Our Father...” – a radical way of thinking then. It expresses a personal intimate way of speaking to God Most High.

Jesus’ growing sense of human, yet divine sonship, is climaxed at his immersion by John the Baptizer in the Jordan when he was then compelled by the Spirit to begin to exercise his calling and ministry as the Messiah. What he knew to be true of himself became evident to John the Baptist when the Father, God himself, spoke to Jesus in John’s hearing, **You are my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased!**

From that moment Jesus took up his prophetic calling as God’s anointed Servant, the Messiah, the Christ of God.

Was this Jesus' own understanding, or simply the opinion of others? How does Jesus identify himself in 3 to 4 years of his ministry? Sometimes people would identify him as a prophet, even think he was a son of God like a king David.

However, Jesus had a favorite self-designation. He called himself ***the Son of Man***. Sometimes we think he's simply calling himself human, but this is not the meaning of the term. In the Gospels, the term "Son of Man" is used by Jesus about 80 times as a mysterious, indirect way of speaking about himself (Mat., 32 times; Mk, 14 times; Lk, 26 times; and Jn, 10 times). In all these texts, Jesus was always the speaker, and no one ever addressed him as "Son of Man" (Tyndale Bible Dictionary). Since Ezekiel had used the term as a way God addressed him, Jesus is using it to identify himself as an eschatological prophet who had the last word about the destruction of Jerusalem. However, the term itself comes directly from Daniel 7:13-14. Jesus asked his disciples, "who do men say that the Son of Man is?"—followed by, "Now, who do *you* say that I am?" (Mt 16:13, 15). "The conclusion generally drawn is that Jesus used the term as a messianic title for himself, so that he could speak modestly about his person and mission yet convey the exalted content he wished to reveal about himself." (Tyndale Bible Dictionary).

Jesus shied away from a direct designation of himself as Messiah or Christ due to the popular misconceptions of the term. Yet he did on occasions clearly state he was indeed the Christ, the Messiah, *the long expected One*. This is clearly seen in John's gospel, chapter 4, where he encounters the woman at the water well at noontime. In the conversation exchange she perceives he is a prophet because he told her things about herself he would not have known unless it was divinely revealed. After relating to her the nature of true worship and the fact that she could find the source of eternal life in him, she said, ***I know that Messiah is coming. When he comes He will explain everything to us.***

"I am He," Jesus told her, "the One speaking to you." v.26

She went into the town telling people about him. ²⁹ "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did! Could this be the Messiah?" ³⁰ They left the town and made their way to Him.

³⁹ Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." ⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. ⁴¹ And because of his words many more became believers.

⁴²They said to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and **we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.**”

Jesus also acknowledges that the disciple’s identification of him as the Christ is the correct answer to his inquiry, “Who do you say that I am?” This began as soon as he started calling his disciples. The first two were John and Andrew. One of the two who heard John the Baptist and followed Jesus to his lodging was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. ⁴¹He first found his own brother, Simon, and said to him, “**We have found the Messiah!**” (which is, being interpreted, **Christ**).

A year or two later Peter makes the great confession on behalf of all the Twelve. Jesus said to them, “Who do you say I am? Simon Peter replied, “**You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.**” Then after the feeding of the 5000 and Jesus’ discourse on himself as the Bread from Heaven, many found this to be a hard saying and left off from following him. He turns to the Twelve and Peter makes this confession, “**We have believed and have come to know, that You are the Holy One of God.**”

Jesus is very clear with his disciples at the last Passover that he shared with them before his crucifixion in John 13-17. Here he discloses to them his and the Father’s identity.

Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” John 14:6

There can be no doubt about Jesus’ self-identity as the unique Son of the Father who came from the Father’s side. We see this after his statement under oath to the High Priest at his trial before the Jewish authorities. It is recorded by Mark, Matthew and Luke.

Mark 14:60 The high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, "Have you no answer? What is it which these testify against you?" But he stayed quiet, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?"

Jesus said, "**I am. You will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of the sky.**"

The high priest tore his clothes, and said, "What further need have we of witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy! What do you think?"

In Matthew 26:62 and following we read, "The high priest stood up, and said to him, "Have you no answer? What is this that these testify against you?" But Jesus held his peace. The high priest answered him, "I adjure you by the living God, that you tell us whether you are the Christ, the Son of God."

Jesus said to him, "You have said it. Nevertheless, I tell you, after this you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of the sky."

Then the high priest tore his clothing, saying, "He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Behold, now you have heard his blasphemy. What do you think?"

And we read the other parallel account in Luke 22:66-71:

"When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people gathered together, both chief priests and scribes. And they led him away to their council, and they said, "If you are the Christ, tell us." But he said to them, "If I tell you, you will not believe, and if I ask you, you will not answer. But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God." So they all said, "Are you the Son of God, then?" And he said to them, "You say that I am."

Jesus was applying **Daniel 7:13-14** directly to himself: "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a **son of man**, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. Dominion was given him, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which will not pass away, and his kingdom one that which will not be destroyed."

This is an absolute claim to be the Messiah, the Son of God. This is what Jesus was referring to by his use of the title "Son of Man."

What is Jesus's identity according to Jesus? He told his disciples twice on the day he arose from the dead. "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶ and said to them, "Thus it is written, that ***the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead,*** ⁴⁷ ***and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.*** ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things." Luke 24:44-48

This is the reality that undergirds the use of the name LORD JESUS CHRIST and its variations in Acts and the Epistles. To know Jesus, you must know who he is. You must trust in his very person and what he did for our redemption on the cross and his resurrection and ascension to

receive eternal life and the forgiveness of your sins. To know God, you must know his unique Son, who is one with him. He who honors the Son honors the Father who sent him. This is the testimony of the Apostle John. 1 John 4:14-15¹⁴ ***And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵ If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God.***

Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of the world, the Son of Man whose cross and resurrection are the basis of eternal life? You must believe and follow him. To know Jesus is to know the way of salvation, the way to fellowship with the living God. Hear Jesus own words in his prayer just before he goes to the garden to pray and then to the sufferings of the cross.

“Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may also glorify you; ² even as you gave him authority over all flesh, so he will give eternal life to all whom you have given him. ³ This is eternal life, that they should know you, the only true God, and him whom you sent, Jesus Christ.

This has been Wayne Conrad with Bible Insights.

“T this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

Amen.