

JESUS

SWEETEST NAME I KNOW

WHO JESUS IS AND WHY IT MATTERS

There is nothing quite like your favorite pair of jeans. You can dress them up, you can dress them down. You can work in them, play in them, shop in them . . . live in them. They always feel right. It is my hope that the structure of this Bible study will fit you like those jeans; that it will work with your life right now, right where you are whether you're new to this whole Bible thing or whether you've been studying the Book for years!

How is this even possible? Smoke and mirrors, perhaps? The new mercilessly thrown in the deep end? The experienced given pompoms and the job of simply cheering others on? None of the above.

Sweeter than Chocolate![®] flexible studies are designed with options that will allow you to go as deep each week as you desire. If you're just starting out and feeling a little overwhelmed, stick with the main text and don't think a second thought about the sidebar assignments. If you're looking for a challenge, then take the sidebar prompts and go ahead and dig all the way to China! As you move along through the study, think of the sidebars and "Digging Deeper" boxes as that 2% of lycra that you find in certain jeans . . . the wiggle-room that will help them fit just right.

Beginners may find that they want to start adding in some of the optional assignments as they go along. Experts may find that when three children are throwing up for three days straight, foregoing those assignments for the week is the way to live wisely.

Life has a way of ebbing and flowing and this study is designed to ebb and flow right along with it!

Enjoy!

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An Inductive Study of Christology

How to use this study

Sweeter than Chocolate![®] studies meet you where you are and take you as far as you want to go.

1. WEEKLY STUDY: The main text guides you through the complete topic of study for the week.

2. FYI boxes: For Your Information boxes provide bite-sized material to shed additional light on the topic.

FYI:

Reading Tip: Begin with prayer

You may have heard this a million times over and if this is a million and one, so be it. Whenever you read or study God's Word, first pray and ask His Spirit to be your Guide.

3. ONE STEP FURTHER and other sidebar boxes: Sidebar boxes give you the option to push yourself a little further. If you have extra time or are looking for an extra challenge, you can try one, all, or any number in between! These boxes give you the ultimate in flexibility.

ONE STEP FURTHER:

Word Study: *torah*/law

The first of eight Hebrew key words we encounter for God's Word is *torah* translated "law." If you're up for a challenge this week, do a word study to learn what you can about *torah*. Run a concordance search and examine where the word *torah* appears in the Old Testament and see what you can learn from the contexts.

If you decide to look for the word for "law" in the New Testament, you'll find that the primary Greek word is *nomos*.

Be sure to see what Paul says about the law in Galatians 3 and what Jesus says in Matthew 5.

4. DIGGING DEEPER boxes: If you're looking to go further, Digging Deeper sections will help you sharpen your skills as you continue to mine the truths of Scripture for yourself.

Digging Deeper

What else does God's Word say about counselors?

If you can, spend some time this week digging around for what God's Word says about counselors.

Start by considering what you already know about counsel from the Word of God and see if you can actually show where these truths are in the Bible. Make sure that the Word actually says what you think it says.

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Week One

Who Do You Say I Am?

Jesus said to his disciples, "But who do you say that I am?"

—Matthew 16:15

It is the ultimate question and people answer it in a myriad of ways: *Who do you say Jesus is?*

During His time on earth, people knew Jesus was more than a carpenter. In fact many figured He was more than a man. Something about Him was different. Normal people don't walk on water. Typical guys don't raise the dead. Some, like Peter, knew who He was. Others pegged Him for a resurrected prophet, possibly John the Baptist, Elijah, or Jeremiah.

Who is He? was a huge question in the first century and it remains the ultimate question today. It is the primary question of this study because it is the primary question of life.

In the end it won't matter what your mom or your spouse or your pastor said about Jesus. The question is yours to answer: *Who do you say He is?*

FYI:

If You're in a Class

Complete **Week One** together on your first day of class. This will be a great way to start getting to know one another and will help those who are newer to Bible study get their bearings.

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CONSIDER the WAY you THINK

As we start our study, we need to examine our presuppositions. Each of us will come to a better understanding of *why* we believe what we believe. For now, let's consider what views we're bringing to table.

FYI:

Remember Your Math Test

Math is not just about having the right answer; it's about knowing *why* the answer is right. The same holds for scriptural understanding.

Peter calls Christians to revere Christ as Lord "always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15).

Knowing and revering Jesus as Lord is one thing; explaining it is another. During this class we're going to examine what the Bible says and learn how to communicate our hope with others.

As we go along, don't be afraid to ask questions to help you clarify not only *what* you believe about Jesus but also *why* you believe it!

How would you answer the question Jesus posed to Peter: *Who do you say I am?*

Why?

When did you come to this view?

What do you base your beliefs on?

What questions do you hope to find answers for during this study?

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Digging Deeper

What do others think about Jesus?

How does the world view Jesus today? What false views do you encounter regularly? If you have some time this week, find out some false beliefs about Jesus. False religions and philosophies always stray from biblical views of Jesus. Some appear orthodox at first blush which is why knowing the Bible for yourself is so important. Record below what you learn but don't over-do this section. The best way to guard against error is by focusing on truth.

Islam

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormonism)

Jehovah's Witnesses

Hinduism

Buddism

Other

FYI:

Four Accounts, One Gospel

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John give four separate accounts of the one Gospel of Jesus Christ. Gospel comes from the Greek word *euaggelion* which means "good news."

FYI:

Start with Prayer

You've probably heard it before and if we study together in the future, you're sure to hear it again. Whenever you read or study God's Word, first pray and ask His Spirit to be your Guide. Jesus says that the Spirit will lead us into all truth.

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FLASHBACK: “From the Foundation of the World”

Every year at Christmas we celebrate the incarnation of Jesus Christ, His taking on flesh and blood and becoming one of us. We’re going to look closely at the Gospel accounts and various New Testament Christological passages as we consider how long Jesus has existed.

We’re going to begin with some theologically packed verses. At this point, though, our main focus will be on time. Let’s set our framework by asking and answering a variety of “When?” questions.

OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE

READ the following passages and **CIRCLE** every reference to *before the foundation of the world* (*pro kataboles kosmou*). The first text quotes Jesus. The speaker in the second text is Paul, in the third, Peter.

John 17:1-2, 24

- 1 *Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You,*
- 2 *even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life.”*

24 *“Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.”*

Ephesians 1:2-4

- 2 *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*
- 3 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,*
- 4 *just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.*

1 Peter 1:17-21

- 17 *If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth;*
- 18 *knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers,*
- 19 *but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.*
- 20 *For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you*
- 21 *who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.*

FYI:**Reading the Context**

From time to time in our study we’ll cross-reference Scripture to see what other passages say about a similar topic. On the next couple of pages, for instance, we’re going to consider whether Jesus existed prior to His incarnation by examining verses where the phrase *before the foundation of the world* appears.

You can read the verses right here in the workbook but if you have time, you’ll benefit by reading the entire chapter to establish contexts for yourself.

DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own . . .

What did you initially observe from the texts? How do they compare with one another?

John 17 Questions

Who is Jesus addressing?

What relationship do the two have?

How far back do they go?

Did the Father begin loving Jesus when He was born? When did the Father love Him?

ONE STEP FURTHER:

Reading the Context

If you have some extra time this week, read John 17, Ephesians 1, and 1 Peter 1 to see the contexts of the verses we're looking at. Jot down your observations below.

John 17

Ephesians 1

1 Peter 1

Week One: **Who Do You Say I Am?**

Ephesians 1 Questions

What does Paul say happened “before the foundation of the world”?

Who is the “He” who chose?

What does “in Christ” (vv. 3 and 4) mean?

1 Peter Questions

How are people redeemed?

When did Christ appear on earth?

Is this when God's plan started? Explain.

Summary Questions

What existed “before the foundation of the world”? What happened then?

What does this have to do with the person and work of Jesus Christ?

What, if any, implications does this have for you?

Looking at Jesus “before the foundation of the world” provides a good foundation for our study but there is so much more about pre-Christmas Jesus throughout the pages of Scripture. Let’s look at three more passages pointing to His work in creation.

OBSERVE the **TEXT** of **SCRIPTURE**

READ the following texts and **CIRCLE** any time phrases (*before, in the beginning, etc.*). **UNDERLINE** any words or phrases related to creation (*creation, created, came into being, etc.*).

Colossians 1:15-17

15 *He [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.*

16 *For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.*

17 *He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.*

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Week One: **Who Do You Say I Am?**

Genesis 1:1-2, 26

- 1 *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*
- 2 *The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.*

26 *Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."*

John 1:1-3, 14

- 1 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*
- 2 *He was in the beginning with God.*
- 3 *All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.*

14 *And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own . . .

What did you initially observe from the texts?

Questions on Colossians

What do these verses tell us about Jesus?

What do they tell us about what Jesus did and does?

ONE STEP FURTHER:

Reading the Context

Again, if you have time, invest some reading the contexts. Jot down your observations from Colossians 1, Genesis 1, and John 1.

Colossians 1

Genesis 1

John 1

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Do you have any follow-up questions for this text you'd like to pursue? If so, what?

Questions on Genesis and John

According to Genesis, who created the heavens and earth?

Is anyone else mentioned in these Genesis verses? If so, who?

Is "the Spirit of God" (v. 2) "God" (v. 1)? Explain your answer.

According to John who or what "was" in the beginning?

ONE STEP FURTHER:

Word Study: Firstborn

If you have some extra time this week, see what you can discover about the word translated *firstborn* in Colossians 1:15. Look at how the word is used in other passages and consider the logic of its placement in this passage. When you've finished observing on your own check word study helps and commentaries. Record your conclusions below.

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Week One: **Who Do You Say I Am?**

How does John 1:1-3 describe the Word?

How does John 1:14 expand the definition?

Summary Questions

What do these texts tell us about Christ before Christmas?

What do they tell us about Christ after Christmas, about His role in the universe today?

Why does this matter?

THE QUESTION AT HAND . . .

As we close our first week of study, let's look again at the question Jesus posed to Peter. It is the question He asks every person to answer: *Who do you say that I am?*

OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE

READ Matthew 16:13-17 and **MARK** every reference to *Jesus*.

Matthew 16:13-17

13 *Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"*

14 *And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets."*

15 *He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"*

16 *Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."*

17 *And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven."*

DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own . . .

How does Jesus refer to Himself here?

Who do other people think He is?

FYI:

Two Caesareas

From time to time we run into biblical cities with the same name. Simon Peter confessed Jesus as the Christ at Caesarea Philippi, a city near the source of the Jordan River—over 20 miles north of the Sea of Galilee. Phillip the tetrarch named the city in honor of Augustus Caesar.

The other Caesarea, also named for Augustus, was a major port city located on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea.

Week One: **Who Do You Say I Am?**

How does Peter answer the question: "But who do you say that I am?"

What does the word *Christ* mean? What was Peter declaring about Jesus?

Where did he get this information?

How do people today know who Jesus is? Can we argue people to Jesus? Explain and cite Scripture to support your view.

Digging Deeper

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John

While we'll be all over the Bible during our study together, we'll spend much time in the Gospels looking at Jesus. If you have some extra time this week, look for background information on the Gospel writers. Who were they? What primary audience was each addressing? Which Gospel accounts have the most in common? Is any one of them a stand-alone? Record background information on the Gospels and their writers below.

Matthew

Mark

FYI:

Too open-ended?

My goal with open-ended questions—particularly in **Digging Deeper** sections—is to challenge you to think for yourself without depending on prompts. Over time this will help you reason through texts more and more for yourself. I believe you'll discover more if you're given more room to ask questions and explore.

Luke

John

@THE END OF THE DAY . . .

We have many miles yet to travel in our investigation of Jesus, many other aspects of His person and work to consider. As we close this week of study, take some time to read back through the Scriptures we've looked at and ask God to plant these truths in your heart. Then record below the most important truth about Jesus that you either learned or have been reminded of this week.

Notes

Week One: **Who Do You Say I Am?**

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